THE INDEPENDENT

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The man who can't catch Aids

Discovery may lead to vaccine

TOM WILKIE
Science Editor

Scientists have found a man who cannot catch the virus that causes Aids – and his blood may hold the key to developing the first vaccine.

In his blood the New Yorker Steve Crohn has the first known substance in the world that will defeat the HIV virus.

Scientists already knew of many individuals who remain healthy for a very long time between infection with HIV and developing full-blown Aids. The difference in the case of Mr Crohn is that he appears to be resistant to infection with HIV in the first place.

Mr Crohn, 49, a freelance editor for Fodor's Travel Guides, and another New Yorker who also appears to be immune, were discovered by a young Glaswegian scientist, Dr Bill Paxton, of the Aaron Diamond Aids Research Center, in New York. Dr Paxton and his colleagues have found a further 23 people who, although not completely immune, show some degree of resistance to HIV infection. Many of these individuals have remained free of HIV despite a history of unsafe sex with multiple sexual partners who subsequently died of Aids.

From these individuals, Dr Paxton and his colleagues have taken the white blood cells – known as CD4 cells – which are the particular target of HIV, cultured the cells in the laboratory, and tried unsuccessfully to infect them with HIV. In the case of Mr Crohn's cells, the researchers could only get the infection to "take" by flooding the cultured cells with huge amounts of virus – far more than would be present in the course of a naturally occurring form of infection.

There have been indications that some people might be resistant to HIV infection, because of the chance shuffling of the genes they inherited from their parents. Some prostitutes in Africa have remained HIV free despite frequent unsafe heterosexual encounters in countries where the rate of HIV infection is very high.

However, this evidence is only statistical. The new research has identified specific individuals and their biochemistry to work out the precise mechanism of resistance.

Dr Paxton said yesterday, "If we can determine what is protecting these people, then you can envisage therapy or vaccine design."

Dr Paxton and his colleagues have already identified one set of biochemical compounds, known as chemokines, which appear to be acting in these people to defeat HIV. These substances were first recognised only five years ago and appear to play a role in the immune system – the body's defence against invading bacteria and viruses. They report their findings in the April issue of the scientific journal *Nature Medicine*.

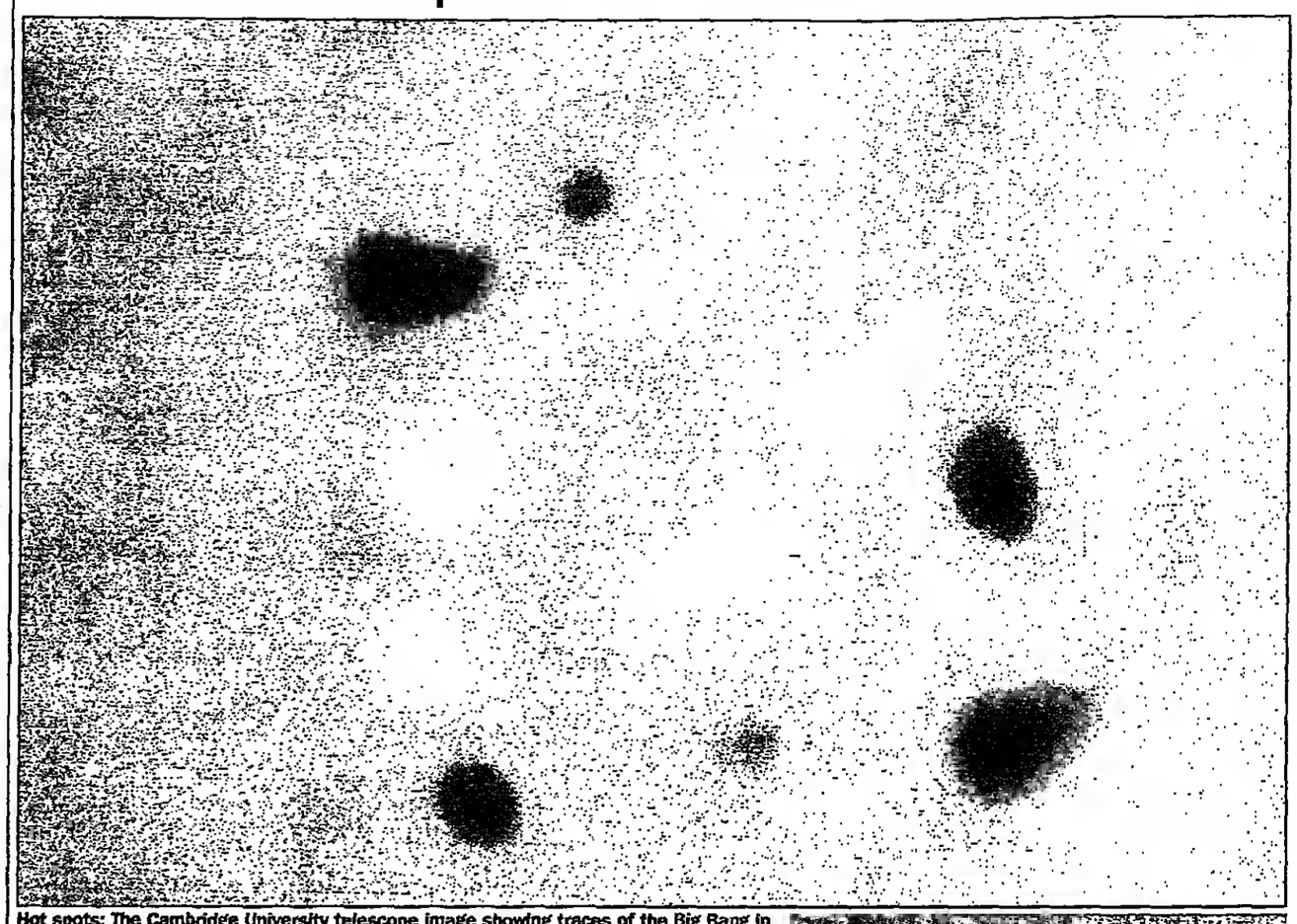
Conventional vaccines consist of antibodies to the infecting agent produced by the immune system but, partly because HIV subverts the cells of the immune system itself and partly because it is highly variable, no one has succeeded in producing a vaccine against it. The chemokines Dr Paxton and his colleagues have found are not antibodies. They are involved in the "inflammatory" response – when a wound or site of infection become inflamed.

"I do not believe that next week everybody will be injecting chemokines and curing Aids, but definitely we're on a line," Dr Paxton said.

Dr Paxton stressed that any vaccine or treatment was still a long way off: "I'm really worried about how people will take this news – people should not give up a safe-sex policy."

For Mr Crohn, the thought that his blood might hold a vital secret in the battle against Aids "would be very touching to me". His partner, Jerry Greenwood, died of Aids in 1982 – before the disease even had a name. "I haven't had a partner since," Mr Crohn said. "I've had affairs and several of the people I went with have died." To the prospect that a vaccine might be based on his blood, Mr Crohn could say only, "this is kind of wonderful".

Scientists capture the colours of creation



Hot spots: The Cambridge University telescope image showing traces of the Big Bang in the night sky and (right) its position in relation to the stars

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

The different colours in this picture represent a breakthrough by British technology – and our clearest picture yet of the origins of the universe.

The range of colours here represent a total temperature difference of just 0.00001 degree Centigrade, in a part of the night sky which reveals distant echoes of the Big Bang. It was captured by CAT, a new radio-telescope designed by physicists at Cambridge University and situated near the city.

Scientists have long theorised that when the universe came into being, about 15 billion years ago, the galaxies began to form where matter and energy were clumped together. Such variations in density should show up as different temperatures in the sky, since the universe was enormously hot at its birth. Space is not completely cold: in fact it has an effective temperature of 2.7C above absolute zero, where activity stops entirely. But the variations are now tiny.

In 1992, the US space agency NASA offered definitive evidence of this, when its COBE satellite produced a picture of the entire sky, showing "ripples" in its temperature, confirming the theories and giving a broad glimpse of the after-effects of the Big Bang.

This picture shows those ripples in far greater detail than COBE did, from a time when the universe was only about 300,000 years old. CAT is 40 times more sensitive to temperature variations than COBE, yet cost a fraction as much – £250,000, rather than $300m.

Rather than a satellite, the team used three radio antennae, each 70 centimetres wide and two metres apart. This let them filter out the atmospheric effects that usually trouble ground-based experiments.

Following the success of the work the British Government has agreed to fund a £2.5m array of 10 such antennae, which will be based on Mount Teide in Tenerife. The new telescope, known as the "Very Small Array", will be used to help to answer more detailed questions – about the age of the universe, its rate of expansion, and two key questions: how much unseen, or "dark", matter is out there, and how the galaxies formed at all.

The red comet, page 11

10 suicides after child abuse case

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Legal Affairs Editor

Ten young people killed themselves following their experiences at the hands of sex abusers in care homes in Clwyd, according to the independent report into the scandal suppressed by the county council.

The deaths are highlighted in the unpublished report's summary, where it calls for a full public judicial inquiry under local government legislation.

Sources also revealed that the inquiry team, led by John Jillings, former director of social services in Derbyshire, has called in the report for the North Wales police force to submit to an investigation by the Police Complaints Authority. After a threat from its insurers that negligence cover could be revoked, Clwyd council put a block on publication of the 300-page report and gagged councillors from even revealing the call for a public inquiry.

The new disclosures come as North Wales Police signalled its readiness to get a High Court order to force Clwyd to release files on up to 30 young people as part of a fresh investigation into the activities of a local carer of children with a previous conviction for indecent assault.

In this second instance of Clwyd refusing to release crucial information about one of Britain's worst child abuse scandals, the council insists it is obliged to claim public interest immunity in relation to the documentation.

Officers want the files to trace the young people who were in care in Clwyd as children. The inquiry could eventually spread to other parts of the country, where the individual has had past responsibility for the care of about 1,000 young people.

Ron Davies, shadow Secretary of State for Wales, has written to William Hague, the Secretary of State, urging him to place the Jillings report in the House of Commons library – but no response from the Welsh Office had emerged last night.

Rhodri Morgan, Labour MP for Cardiff West, last night tabled a Commons motion calling on Mr Hague to honour a pledge made in September 1992 by Gwilym Jones, a Welsh Office minister, to hold a public inquiry after allegations were made against social services staff and police officers.

David Owen, former Chief Constable of the North Wales force, also backed such an investigation once criminal trials had been concluded.

The Jillings report is also understood to make reference to "prominent" people being involved in the scandal, but says that it had neither the resources nor the authority to address that suggestion.

Most of the young people referred to in the report are said to have taken their own lives. Where children's interests were in conflict with the authorities, the report says: "We have found that in many cases the interests of institutions and professions have come first instead."

One North Wales source last night put the number of consequential deaths at more like 16, with young people hanging themselves, overdosing on drugs, slashing their throats or wrists and jumping off bridges or roofs.

But there was at least one coroner's verdict that one young man had been unlawfully killed in a fire. Some of the suicide cases were key witnesses in the criminal trials that followed the first police investigation.

BT in talks on £35bn merger

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

BT and Cable & Wireless are in talks which could lead to a £33bn merger – the largest in UK corporate history and considerably bigger that last year's £9.3bn merger of the Glaxo and Wellcome drugs groups.

The merger discussions were confirmed last night by C&W, which is worth more than £11bn, after weeks of stock market speculation over the on-off relationship between the rival companies.

The merger would require Government permission and would inevitably result in the disposal of Mercury Communications, C&W's UK subsidiary and the single biggest competitor for BT.

The admission from C&W followed feverish rumours in the City, which were accompanied by surges in the share price of both groups. The company said that the talks were "exploratory" and "may or may not lead to a merger".

BT confirmed last night that talks between the two companies' advisers had taken place.

Sir Iain Vallance, BT's chairman, is believed to be have held talks since the end of last year with Brian Smith, C&W's chairman, and Rod Olsen, acting chief executive. His approach followed Cable & Wireless' descent into chaos after a bitter boardroom struggle.

Full story, page 23
Comment, page 25

In Section Two

Your complete guide to the arts, entertainment and television and radio in the next seven days

IN BRIEF

Soldiers guilty

Three British soldiers were found guilty yesterday of killing a young Danish woman in Cyprus. The court in Lanarca said that Allan Ford, 27, from Birmingham, Justin Fowler, 28, from Falmouth and Geoff Pernell, 24, from Oldbury, had committed manslaughter, conspiracy to rape and abuduction in 1994. They will be sentenced next week.

Schools choice

All schools could be offered the chance to become fully selective in a White Paper that will be published in June. Page 3

Major seeks European deal to end beef crisis

COLIN BROWN

John Major will today demand the lifting of the worldwide ban on British beef at the European summit in Turin in return for a package of measures to destroy millions of cows and compensate farmers, in the hope of restoring consumer confidence.

The first steps in a massive selective slaughter programme began last night when Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, announced a series of interim measures aimed at restoring confidence and persuading the European Commission to lift the ban.

They included an immediate ban on the sale of meat from newly slaughtered cattle over 30 months old; extending specified bovine offal (SBO) controls to stop possibly infected cattle beads and lymph glands entering the food chain: £1.5m a week compensation to the rendering industry; and £50m a year in EU aid for the slaughter of bull calves up to 10 days old.

The hard-bargaining was already under way on the British package on the eve of today's summit between European Commission and British officials, led by Richard Packer, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr Hogg will meet Franz Fischler, the European Commissioner in Brussels today.

The final deal could be reached at a meeting of agriculture ministers on Monday, but Mr Major's key demand will be for the early lifting of the ban, which ministers believe is the only hope of rebuilding consumer confidence.

The Prime Minister will be seeking a cut in Britain's annual contributions to the EU to pay for the compensation, which could amount to £500m a year for farmers.

The package, approved by the Cabinet yesterday, will include selective destruction of cows, and could last for years.

The BSE affair, described by one official as a "huge crisis", is certain to dominate the formal opening of the conference.

news

Fast-track Bill to combat terrorists

DONALD MACINTYRE

The Government is planning to introduce a new raft of fast-track legislation to tighten security in the wake of IRA's decision to end the ceasefire and renew its bombing campaign.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, yesterday held private discussions with opposition spokesmen in the hope of securing cross-party support for legislation as early as next week.

The move follows representation by police to put tightened security checks – particularly on passengers using public transport – on a firmer statutory footing and to strengthen stop and search powers in relation to suspected terrorist offences.

Details of the discussions were being kept confidential last night but ministers are believed ideally to be seeking to secure the new powers before the Easter recess which begins next Thursday. This would almost certainly only be possible if the government had cross-party support, including that of Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary who took part in yesterday's discussions.

Labour has been careful not to obstruct the Government on counter-terrorism measures and the party earlier this month shifted its stance towards the Prevention of Terrorism Act by deciding to abstain on the issue, although 25 Labour MPs defied the leadership and opposed the renewal of the Act. For the previous 12 years Labour had opposed the renewal of the Act on the grounds that it suspended civil liberties with powers of detention without trial, and orders to exclude Northern Ireland from mainland Britain.

Substantially tighter security checks have already been introduced at Britain's 27 ports, along with greater use of closed-circuit television. Police have a filmed record of the 7,000 vehicles coming into the country each day. Security checks have generally been tightened on passengers, luggage and vehicles passing through ferry ports, the Channel Tunnel and connecting railways.

But the police have also been pressing for measures to ensure that the newly tightened security is on a firm legal footing. One possibility is for vehicle checks to be underpinnned statutorily by an amendment to the Maritime Shipping and Aviation Act. But if there were cross-party support the required package could also be introduced under a simple piece of primary legislation.

Yesterday's talks are understood to have involved Alan Beith, the Liberal Democrats Law and Order spokesman, and Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionists' Security spokesman. The SDLP and the Welsh and Scottish nationalists have also been informed.

The Intelligence and Security Committee said it would also investigate possible gaps in intelligence which may have helped lead to the Docklands bombing in February. The committee will also examine whether MI5 should be given the lead over police in Northern Ireland for counter-terrorism, as it has in the mainland.

The BSE risk: Ministers ponder logistics of mass slaughter as authorities reveal death of another victim

Doubt over vets' role in killing

JAMES CUSICK and PAUL FIELD

SLAUGHTER

The co-operation of Britain's veterinary surgeons in any planned mass slaughter of cattle aimed at eliminating BSE was yesterday put in serious doubt.

Bob Stevenson, president of the British Veterinary Association, said crucial to the success of any mass slaughter would be the supervision of the killing by both Ministry of Agriculture vets and private practice vets. He said the public would demand that vets were present to see that the killings were humane and that adequate precautions on the further spread of the disease were taken.

However Mr Stevenson said that calls for a mass slaughter meant "science was being left behind" and was an unnecessary sacrifice. "I would like to think vets would co-operate. But there is serious question over whether many will have anything to do with this."

He added: "In 1967 both government vets and private practice vets formed a cohesive force to deal with foot and mouth disease. Today that cohesion does not exist."

In Cheshire a vet, Francis Anthony, said: "There will be no co-operation from the veterinary profession. Unless this slaughter is supervised by vets, the public will not be reassured about anything."

Mr Anthony said colleagues, who studied the relevant scientific evidence, believed mass slaughter was unnecessary. "We are being asked to take part in a Frankensteinish slaughter."

If the Government do a U-turn on their response to the BSE crisis the most likely option would be the culling of older cows, as proposed by the NFU - some 15,000 a week for three years.

The logistical difficulties facing the Government are enormous.

Ministers have so far not ruled out the prospect of burying carcasses in authorised dumps or using household incinerators. MAFF has admitted the removal and destruction of older cows from the food chain which could see mass pits being dug on farms, animals shot with a bolt pistol and their carcasses burnt, is an option.

There are only nine incineration plants in Britain licensed to handle around 1,000 cattle a week. These are already destroying 300 cows infected with BSE each week. Only 7 per cent of the older cows earmarked for culling could be coped with, a shortfall of around 750,000 head per year if the NFU proposal is adopted.

The use of household incinerators was dismissed by Phil Burns, of HM Pollution Inspectorate: "The sheer practicalities make it impossible. They are designed to burn paper and plastic not a tonne of meat."

Emission standards from 15 of the 35 domestic waste incinerators in Britain have failed to meet EU standards and are expected to be shut down by the end of the year.

However the Licensed Animal Slaughterers and Salvage Association, is convinced that if the NFU plans were reduced, incinerators could cope with around 3,000 a week, operating around the clock, seven days a week.

Chris Ashworth, technical adviser, said dairy cows at the end of their life should be culled and only those from herds with a confirmed BSE case in the past three years.

"That would bring the figure down to between 100,000 and 150,000 a year. That number would decline over five years to around 50,000 a year. We could cope with that."

Hanging in the balance: A BSE-infected cow is prepared for burning at a government-registered incineration plant near Cambridge Photograph: Brian Harris

Scientist demands action to stop 'Russian roulette'

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

RESEARCH

Urgent action to improve the study of the disease pattern of BSE in cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans is needed, a leading biostatistician said yesterday.

Britain has been playing "Russian roulette with no information on the odds", by allowing beef to be consumed from farms where cases of BSE have occurred, said Sheila Gore, a senior statistician at the Medical Research Council's Biostatistics Unit in Cambridge.

The prevalence of infected cattle by age has not even been monitored by the random examination of cattle brains after slaughter, and any cull strategy must include such studies to establish the prevalence of BSE.

"We must do that, rather than just burn the information," Dr Gore said. That was particularly important, given that more than half the infected cattle reported in 1995 were born after the ban on infected feed was imposed in 1988.

In a leading article in the *British Medical Journal*, Dr Gore said there is "the strongest case" for random pathology on slaughtered cattle, to establish what proportion are affected at what age and provide projections for the disease in animals.

Much more detailed information about the 10 human cases of CJD – exactly when they occurred and at what age – must be published, to allow the "doubling time" of the epidemic to be established.

The CJD Surveillance Unit, set up in 1990, has fulfilled its remit "spectacularly and speedily" by identifying the 10 cases which led to last week's action, she says.

But the quality of epidemiological data being collected is nowhere near as good as that which Britain established for Aids and HIV. Now that the issue has become a public-health rather than agricultural problem, the "signal failure" to provide good epidemiology must be remedied. That would allow better projections of the risks and the likely course of the two diseases.

Results from a study, which started seven years ago to establish whether dams can pass BSE to their offspring, must be released rapidly and every regulation covering BSE must be reviewed.

The study is being run as a blind trial, with researchers not knowing which calves came from cattle with the disease and which came from cattle which are free of it. Seven years on, it is now time to examine the results, which are crucial for projecting future levels of the disease in cattle, and which have implications for humans.

What, Dr Gore asks, is the evidence for excluding cattle under 30 months from the new de-boning and offal provision, when "some bovines under 30 months are certainly infected"?

"Let us have done with misleading the profession, the public and the press with unqualified 'no evidence' statements. All evidence must be quantified."

Kent woman dies of CJD

WILL BENNETT

A young woman from Kent has died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, the human form of BSE, health authorities revealed yesterday.

The death of the woman, who was a 29-year-old accountancy student, fits the pattern of deaths among younger patients which prompted fears that CJD might be caused by BSE-infected beef in the human food chain.

A spokesman for Kent and Canterbury Hospital, where the woman died on 9 February, said: "A woman did die from CJD at the hospital. We referred the case to the health authority."

Dr Chandra Kumar, consultant in communicable disease control with East Kent Health Authority, said: "Tests are being carried out, but the results are not yet known. It is not a notifiable disease, but because of the current situation, this case has been brought to our attention."

It is not known whether the case has been referred to the Government-funded CJD Surveillance Unit, which is looking at all deaths from the disease to try to establish a pattern. A spokeswoman there said: "We do not discuss individual cases."

The victim, who had been ill for two years, is not being identified by the hospital at the request of her family but she is believed to have come from Canterbury. The case is thought to be only the second in Kent in the past 20 years.

The woman is not one of the 10 CJD victims who scientists previously studied and who they believe may have have acquired a new strain of the disease from beef infected with BSE. Those cases prompted last week's government announcement which led to the current beef scare.

Voodoo casts its spell over The Science

DAVID AARONOVITCH

In an average week wild horses could not drag most MPs to agriculture questions. It is bad enough having odd bits of farming chucked into the middle of *The Archers*, interrupting the adulteries and alcoholism with boiled-on conversations concerning feed prices and farrowing. In the House, the "sons-of-the-soil" self-image and continual complaining of the representatives of British agri-business are more than most human flesh can bear.

But where wild horses have failed in the past, yesterday mad cows succeeded. After all the average Labour member's only contact with livestock is the local city farm, (usually comprising three old goats, a gaggle of bad-tempered geese and a sow called Arthur).

So Opposition MPs mustered instead to represent that significant section of the electorate which depends on eating food for its survival.

That agriculture is a priority for Tories is reflected in the calibre of their ministerial team. The brilliant but choleric Douglas Hogg, with his strange forehead (two odd vertical creases run parallel to his hairline, making it look as though the back and sides of his head have been added quite recently) and small face, has held his notorious temper in check for an entire crisis now.

His second-in-command, Angela Browning, has sensible short hair with sensible voice and manner to match, and is reassuringly broad in the beam. There are many more like her leading girls in choruses of "The Quartermaster's Stores" around campfires all over southern England.

Labour's team is not a success. Hogg's shadow, Gavin Strang, seems assailed with self-doubt and hesitation, as if continually asking himself why Labour should have an agriculture spokesman at all. As with many in public life, the lower his confidence falls, the higher his voice becomes.

When he urged Labour's carefully thought-out eight-point action programme on BSE upon Mr Hogg, it reached dog-whistle pitch.

But the truth is that Labour is not really a big part of this business. Especially now that the focus is shifting to Europe, at whom Tony Marlow cast the first brick. "The biggest problem imposed upon our food industry comes from the European Commission!" he declared. Angela Browning agreed, referring to the "disgraceful decision of the scientists of Europe, based not on the science"... Or The Science, as I suspect ministers now think of it. In response to Nick Budgen, she contrasted European practice with our own.

"In this country we take decisions based on The Science. In Europe they failed to do so." The implication was that sur le continent it's The Religion, or The Voodoo that guides policy-making.

David Amess (Basildon) turned to fish: "Essex fishermen are fed up with being allowed to catch only tiddlers, while the rest of Europe are allowed to catch whoppers".

Nicholas Winterton (Congleton) went further. What was being done to "keep pillaging Spanish fishermen out of our waters? What's sauce for the bloody goose is sauce for the gander?"

IN BRIEF

Harrods make new claim against school

Harrods claimed in court that its reputation for all things excellent was in danger of being polluted by the "bad odour" of a sex scandal at a south London prep school.

The Knightsbridge store has asked the Court of Appeal to ban the prep from calling itself The Harrodian School on the grounds that it is passing itself off as having some connection with Harrods and trying to cash in on the company's good will. The judgement was expected yesterday, but in the meantime, Harrods came up with fresh evidence – press cuttings relating how the school's owner, Sir Alford Houstoun-Boswall, had sacked his wife Eliana as headmistress after she had an affair with a teacher.

Water bills promise

A water company with some of the highest charges in the country says that it will no longer disconnect domestic customers who do not pay up. South West Water will employ more debt counsellors and managers to help customers with financial difficulties, but will take court action against non-payers.

Holiday habits

Young male holidaymakers now seek sophistication rather than sun, sand and sex while on foreign trips, says a new survey. Pubbing, clubbing and sunbathing are very much out, as 18-34 year old British men opt for sport and cultural activities, reveal brewers Heineken.

Asbestos ruling

Judgment has been reserved in the Court of Appeal bid by engineering company T&N to overturn a High Court ruling that it must pay damages over two cancer victims who as children played in the drifts of white dust which blanketed the roads around their homes. The decision last year was the first time a court had awarded compensation for asbestos claims made by anyone other than workers.

Rugby player appeal

A rugby player who received the longest jail sentence ever imposed for on-field violence can appeal. But Gloucester lock Simon Devereux, 27, who was convicted of grievous bodily harm against an opponent and jailed for nine months, was refused bail by the Court of Appeal judge.

Collins quits band

Phil Collins has finally quit Genesis after more than 20 years as their lead singer, it has been revealed. The multi-millionaire drummer, singer and songwriter has decided to concentrate full time on his solo career. Album sales have topped 80 million since Collins, 45, took over as the band's singer from Peter Gabriel who quit in 1975.

Skeletons dug up

Quarry workers have unearthed the remains of at least a dozen humans who may have been ritually killed 4,000 years ago. The bodies, which include children, were found in an ancient channel of the River Trent in Nottinghamshire and date from the late neolithic or early bronze age, between 2,000 and 2,350 BC.

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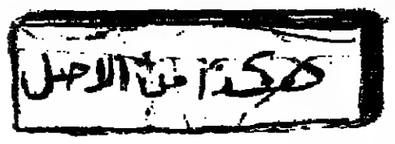


Minister bows to grammar-school zeal

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

All schools could be offered the chance to become fully selective in a White Paper to be published in June, the Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Shephard, said yesterday.

In an apparent climbdown in the face of pressure from the Prime Minister, Mrs Shephard said that the move could mean a new grammar school in every town. John Major wants to distinguish clearly between the Conservatives' education policy and Labour's, and his policy unit is keen to see the setting up of new, privately backed grammar schools.

Mrs Shephard denied rumours that there had been any rift between herself and Mr Major, but leaders of the teachers' unions claimed she had clearly been "whipped into line".

In a speech at the Institute of Education in London yesterday, Mrs Shephard promised a range of options aimed at increasing the proportion of pupils which each school could select.

The Government has already raised the limit from 10 per cent to 15 per cent, but speaking after yesterday's lecture Mrs Shephard said a 100 per cent limit was a possibility. In a consultation on the 15 per cent limit, only 15 out of 1,500 organisations consulted said that they were in favour.

Ruling out a return to the old 11-plus system of selection, she said she had no particular figure in mind for the number of new grammar schools she wanted to see. "We don't want to impose uniformity. We want schools to build on their own strengths. We do want to see more diversity and more selection if that's what parents and schools want," she said.

She and the Prime Minister were completely in agreement on the matter, she added, referring to newspaper speculation about a split. "There is no rift between us. It really has been a ludicrous period in our lives," she said.

This summer's White Paper will propose an expansion of local management, which already gives schools control of between 85 per cent and 95 per cent of their budgets. It will also look at ways of encouraging more schools to opt out.

However, some of the proposals in the paper, including those on giving all schools the chance to move to full academic selection, would have to be manifesto pledges. There would be no time before the election to pass the legislation needed for extra selection in local authority schools, Mrs Shephard said.

David Hart, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said that the Secretary of State had been forced by Downing Street to toe the line.

"I can't believe for one moment that she is supporting the line that every city and town should have a grammar school.

"If the Government is trying to ensure that there is clear blue water between it and the Labour Party, I don't believe the vast majority of parents will cast their vote on the basis of which party is prepared to support a greater amount of selection," he said.

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "The Secretary of State has today demonstrated the Prime Minister's infinite capacity for making things worse. Mrs Shephard is about to plunge the entire school admission system in this country into utter chaos by reintroducing selection."

Feminist fury at academic's 'betrayal'

REBECCA FOWLER

A female academic has infuriated feminists with her controversial claim that women are still happy for their place to be in the home, surrounded by housework, while their male counterparts pursue high-powered careers.

Dr Catherine Hakim, a senior research fellow at the London School of Economics, claims that only one in three women are totally career-minded, one third do not want to work at all, and the rest try to combine both while believing domestic chores are mainly their responsibility.

In an unprecedented retaliation, a group of 11 eminent academics have signed a statement of protest. Dr Hakim has also been accused of failing to support her theories with research and not taking into account economic influences.

But in an acerbic response to her critics, Dr Hakim accuses them of ignoring differences in attitudes among women, many of whom she says have been let down by feminism. Defending her views in the *Journal of Sociology*, she claims that feminists have created misleading "myths", with a disproportionate focus on the needs of career women rather than housewives.

In her paper, entitled *Five Myths on Women's Employment*, Dr Hakim said most women believed in separate roles in marriage, with the man mainly responsible for bread-winning, and the wife tending the home.

She said: "The unpalatable truth is that a substantial proportion of women still accept the sexual division of labour, which sees homemaking as women's principal activity, and income-earning as men's principal activity in life."

Dr Hakim also said that there was no evidence that women with better educations and higher-paid jobs felt differently. She added: "If anything, the opposite is the case, as women can afford to choose between competing lifestyles."

In her own defence in the journal she said that studies across Europe suggested women had been forced into two groups, the career-minded or "grateful slaves". Dr Hakim said: "Some people believe I am being anti-feminist . . . all I am saying is that not every woman feels the same way."

Since she published her pronouncements, Dr Hakim has been accused of betraying the fight for equality for women. Some feminists have refused to talked to her.

Giant step: Model-maker Peter Roberts puts a final touch to a London scene at Legoland Windsor, which opens today Photograph: Philip Meech

Fire brigade liable for damage

Hampshire County Council was today facing a compensation bill of up to £12m after a judge held the county's fire brigade liable for the partial destruction in a blaze of a prestige company headquarters in Basingstoke.

It is believed to be only the second judgment ever obtained against a fire service in the United Kingdom for alleged negligence in the course of its work. The council is expected to appeal.

The fire broke out in the roof of the state-of-the-art headquarters in Basingstoke of Digital Equipment Ltd, known as The Crescent, in March 1990. The owners, Capital & Counties plc, had fitted an automatic sprinkler system which, it was claimed, would have limited the damage to a small area of the roof void if it had not been turned off by the fire brigade.

The allegation was that the firefighters stopped the system while the fire was still blazing in the erroneous belief that there were no sprinklers in the roof void; that the firefighting was somehow being hampered by sprinklers at first-floor ceiling level; and that these could not be isolated and turned off without shutting down the entire system.

Judge Richard Havery QC, sitting as a High Court Official Referee, held there was no justification for the fire officer in charge to depart from the principle that sprinklers should be kept running until a fire was completely under control. He said the decision was "a bad blunder".

The judge rejected an argument by the fire brigade that it owed no legal duty to the owners of the building and, like the police, was immune from being sued as a matter of public policy.

Woman broker wins £81,000 for victimisation

Jubilant: Helen Bamber was victim of 'spite and malice'

A City broker was awarded record compensation of £81,000 yesterday after suffering eight years of sexist victimisation from her Japanese bosses.

Helen Bamber, 33, said she felt vindicated and claimed it was "a day of shame" for international investment bank Fuji. An industrial tribunal launched a scathing attack on the bank, the third largest in the world, for trying to intimidate her and ruin her reputation.

Miss Bamber, of Hampstead, north London, said she suffered continually on the grounds of her sex, being paid £43,000 a year as a Euro-bond dealer while a male colleague received £170,000. She won her claim for sexual discrimination last year but returned to the tribunal after failing to agree compensation and damages.

Tribunal chairman Ian Lamb accused the bank of showing "malevolence, spite, malice and arrogance intended to insult and cause pain to the applicant".

Miss Bamber told the hearing Fuji still bore a grudge against her and tried to blacken her name with her new employers, a British bank in the City, by sending a letter about her case to the chief executive.

Mr Lamb said: "The conduct of the respondent in this case is off the known scale of aggravated damages . . . this is an exceptional case which justifies an exceptional award." He criticised Fuji's deputy managing director, Michael Cole, who represented the bank and attacked Miss Bamber's integrity by accusing her of conspiring with her representative and boyfriend, Cameron McNeill, to extort money from the company. "The two aspects to the counter attack were wholly unfounded and we rejected the theory," Mr Lamb said.

Miss Bamber was given £24,000 for future loss of earnings and a further £20,000 for loss of earnings at Fuji up until April 1994, when she left.

She received £12,000 for her difference in salary within the two years since she worked there, £20,000 for aggravated damages and £5,000 for injury to her feelings. With interest the final figure could top £100,000.

Miss Bamber joined Fuji International Finance as a graduate trainee in 1986 and was consistently praised for her work and called "one of their key sales executives" after earning the company hundreds of thousands of pounds a year. But she claimed on one occasion director Takashi Yoshida told her to resign after she spurned his sexual advances during a business trip.

Mr Cole had earlier accused Mr McNeill of cooking up the sexual allegations to "add spice" to his girlfriend's claims.

news

Murder trial halted by judge

A murder trial was halted and the jury discharged yesterday to allow the defence to investigate new information.

Marcel Williams, 32, of Old Trafford, Manchester, was on trial at Liverpool Crown Court accused of shooting dead a man who was flyposting notices, and wounding his partner.

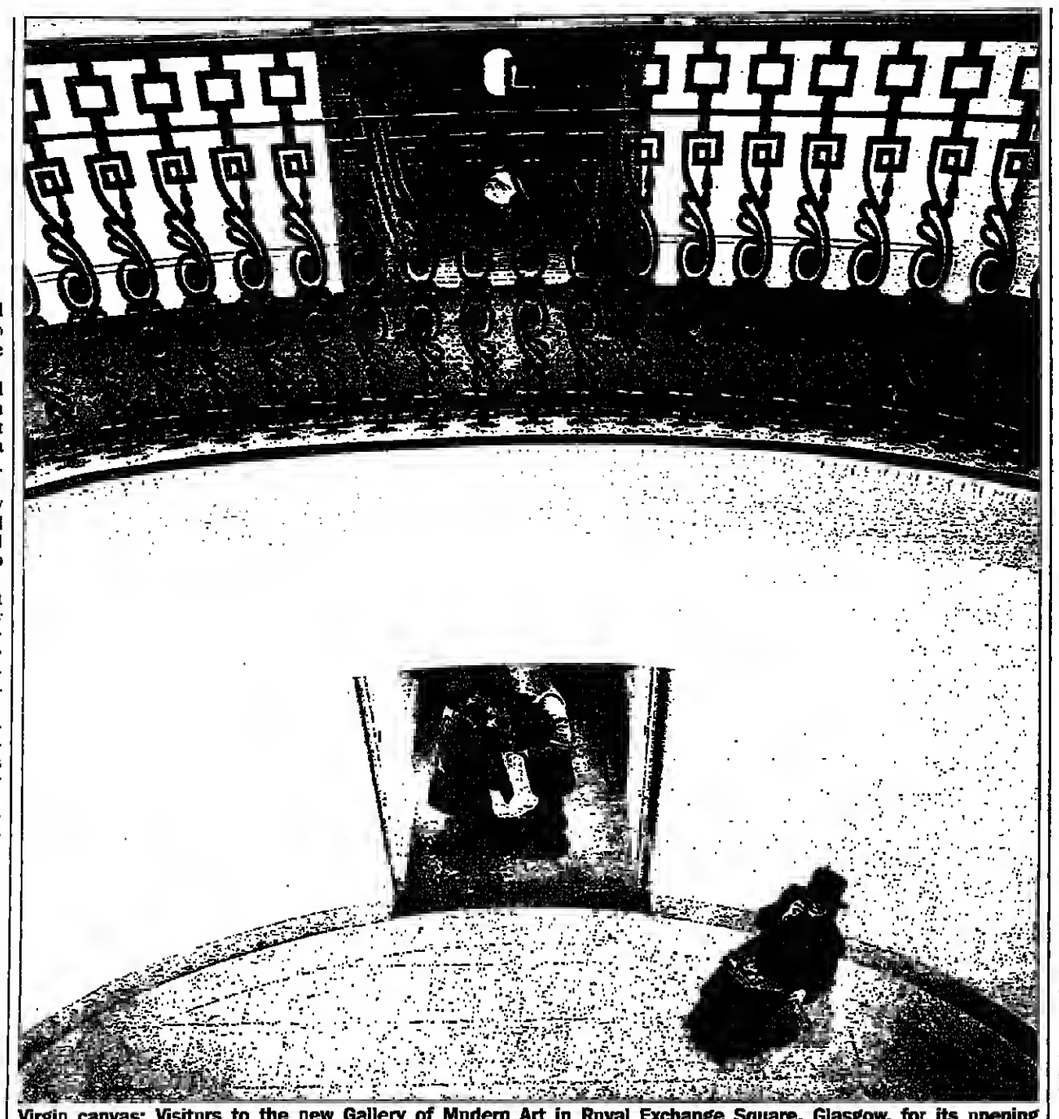
The court was told that new information had been provided to Mr Williams's QC, Michael Mansfield, and he wished to pursue it.

Mr Justice Smedley said it was impossible for the four-day trial to continue. "It is not the kind of investigation that can be done in a day, so very regrettably I am going to have to discharge you," he told the jury.

Mr Williams denies murdering Chris Horrox, 30, and attempting to murder his business partner, Jimmy Carr, 46. Mr Carr and Mr Horrox were out flyposting on the night of 2 May 1994 when Mr Carr was hit by four bullets and Mr Horrox was shot through the head.

Mr Carr has told the court that he and Mr Horrox were sticking up posters in Manchester when they were shot by Mr Williams. Mr Carr said that after being shot, he pretended to be dead. He said he was shot twice more and then heard Mr Williams shoot Mr Horrox.

Mr Williams, who claims he was "set up" and was nowhere near the scene of the shooting, was further remanded in custody until Monday.



Virgin canvas: Visitors to the new Gallery of Modern Art in Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow, for its opening ceremony yesterday. The collection is open to the public from tomorrow Photograph: Paul Reid

Care in the community: Policy changes after double death

'Agencies failed to provide for schizophrenic'

GLENDA COOPER

A schizophrenic who killed his mother and then committed suicide was let down by "inadequate" care in the community, an inquiry said yesterday

Last April Robert Viner, 42, a civil engineering graduate who had lived in the community since 1982, battered his mother, Muriel, to death at her home in Corfe Mullen, Dorset, with an exercise weight and then killed himself with an overdose.

The report came the day after the inquiry into the care and treatment of the schizophrenic triple killer, Jason Mitchell, called for a shake-up in mental health laws.

While the independent inquiry found that the Viners' deaths could not have been predicted, it noted that there had been no consideration of the needs of Mrs Viner, 76, who had cared for her son for 15 years.

This was exacerbated by the "deficiencies" in communication between health, social services and housing authorities who failed to address the needs both of her and her son.

At the inquest last August, which recorded a verdict of unlawful killing on Mrs Viner, and an open verdict on her son, it was heard that Mrs Viner felt her son should move into sheltered accommodation.

Three days before the deaths a community psychiatric nurse had found Mrs Viner "at the end of her tether" with her son and Colin Greaves, her son-in-law, also told the inquest she had been so concerned for her safety that she had hidden all the kitchen knives.

The inquiry found that Mrs Viner would have benefited from having somebody to talk to. She would not confide in her GP and one friend described her as "a prisoner of her son".

It states: "It must be a matter for concern that Muriel Viner could have cared for her son in the community for a substantial number of years and yet have had no effective contact with the social services department which would have enabled her to have access to assistance in her own right".

Robert Viner: Mother could have got more help

The inquiry said there was no clear evidence that staffing levels had an adverse effect on care, but noted that a lack of special needs housing "may have hampered the successful management" of the case".

Mr Viner was not included in the Care Programme Approach, under which the mentally ill are given a key worker. Dorset Health Commission said it had now extended the programme so that it included all patients in contact with specialist mental health services.

The chairman of the inquiry, Anthony Harbour, said : "We recognize that the professionals involved in Robert Viner's and Muriel Viner's care worked with compassion and dedication. Nevertheless we considered this case highlights the inadequacy of the limited implementation of the care programme approach which was adopted in Dorset."

The report also found a lack of communication between agencies which "contributed to a failure to fully identify the needs of either Robert or Muriel Viner and to provide a comprehensive care plan".

The health commission said it was implementing an action plan to ensure the 36 recommendations made by the inquiry were swiftly implemented and £750,000 had been set aside to develop support for carers in Dorset and a Carers' Charter had been introduced.

More community psychiatric nurses and seven new social worker posts have been created to support the work of mental health teams with regular monitoring of those under the care programme approach.

The chief executive of the commission, Ian Carruthers, said: "The deaths of Robert and Muriel Viner were a regrettable tragedy . . . Important changes in service provision have already been made in the light of an internal inquiry into the deaths. In addition the agencies involved . . . have signed up to an action plan to ensure the inquiry team's recommendations are carried forward."

Minister quits over baptism

A Methodist minister yesterday announced he had resigned because of an "amicable" disagreement with his church over the issue of baptism.

The Rev Terry Pottle, based at Amble, Northumberland, said he no longer wished to perform the ceremony – which placed him in direct contravention of church policy.

"The position is very simple: the Methodist Church maintains a position of baptising babies as a sign of God's love and offer of grace to all people," said Mr Pottle, who serves six churches and is also Methodist chaplain to Acklington Prison.

"From my point of view this was not the practice of the early church, neither is it taught in the Bible. The Methodist Church requires ministers to baptise infants where appropriate. I feel that I can no longer, in good conscience, do this and have therefore tendered my resignation, which has been accepted by the President of the Methodist Conference.

"Obviously, I am very sad to be going but as a minister I feel I have to maintain my own integrity if I am to preach the Bible to other people. But it is an amicable parting under the circumstances." Mr Pottle, 45, and his wife, Marie, are due to leave their tied home in August after four years of service.

Mr Pottle said that if anyone approached him asking for a baptism he referred them to another minister who would do it, which meant the church was not turning anyone away.

He said he wished to continue as a minister and was now considering approaching other Christian denominations which did not carry out baptisms.

The Rev Dr Stephen Mosedale, the Methodist Coordinating Secretary of Church Life, based in London, said: "We do have a clear policy about what we expect of our ministers as regards infant baptism: it is that they are required to be willing to baptise them in appropriate circumstances.

"Therefore, it is inevitable a minister who no longer feels willing to undertake baby baptism will have to resign."

Families 'need more say'

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

The balance between the rights of the mentally ill and those of their families needs to tip back in favour of the families, Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of the mental health charity Sane, said yesterday in the wake of the Jason Mitchell and Robert Viner reports.

At the same time, she warned, the Government's recently announced package to improve help for the mentally ill remained completely inadequate.

Both the Mitchell and Viner cases – in which one killed his father and the other his mother – showed that relatives were not listened to and failed to get the support they needed, she said. "The professionals, as usual, took the view that they would wait until something worse happened," she said.

The problem, she said, was that psychiatrists, nurses and social workers all acted as advocates for the patient, "but there is no one to act as advocate for the families.

"There are people working for the rights and fulfilment of the person who is mentally ill, but not for the rights of families, and particularly of elderly parents. And there is a conflict of interest between the two.

"There obviously has to be a balance struck, but the pendulum has to swing back. There is too little attention paid to the needs of relatives and carers."

In neither of the recent cases, she said, would the package of new measures announced by Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, help.

It involved a £95m programme, far from all of which was new money, which included new 24-hour nursed homes to provide asylum for the most distributed schizophrenics and others who need the "long stay" care which used to be provided hospital. But divided up between health authorities, she said, that amounted to around £500,000 each – barely enough to run just one of the 20-bed units each, even if the capital to build them was found.

"What are they meant to do with all the rest of the people who don't qualify for these few facilities?" she asked. "These measures simply do not match the scale of the problem."

Electronic road tolls run into traffic

JAMES CUSICK

Plans for the introduction of electronic road tolls on Britain's motorways, regarded as crucial to the Government's future transport strategy, are facing further serious delay after the withdrawal of half the private-sector companies involved in developing the toll technology.

Charges for using the 2,000-mile motorway network were being planned for introduction in 1998 with the Government banking on receiving £700m from the toll charges. Electronic tolling would also have provided the key to charging motorists on new roads financed by the private sector.

A year ago the Department of Transport was trumpeting Britain's potential world lead in electronic toll technology. Trails were scheduled to begin this summer on the M3 with eight leading firms involved in designing a national toll system. However the timetable slipped back 18 months. Now, with the withdrawal of the three firms, there is even more delay.

Although the DoT said the withdrawals were for "commercial" reasons, the project has allegedly been dogged by disillusionment over government pricing policy arguments. Siemens, one of the companies who pulled out, would not comment on the decision yesterday.

The DoT confirmed yesterday that it "would be unlikely for the motorway trails to commence this year". A report in today's *Economist* suggested the entire project was on the verge of collapse.

The continuing delays have put the idea of selling toll charges to the public, "perilously close to the coming general election", according to Whitehall sources. There has been growing concern in some government circles that descriptions of the electronic road charges as a potential "poll tax on wheels" were justified. One study, compiled by the Centre for Policy Studies, concluded that there was "a real risk of civil disobedience" if any system was not completely accurate.

Burger King®: an announcement about our new beef.

In the light of current events, we have taken the decision to source all beef supplies outside the United Kingdom. This decision has been based solely on our customers' continued concern and apparent lack of confidence in British beef.

Managing Director of Burger King Europe, Craig Bushey, made this announcement:

"As we have stated previously, all Burger King patties are made from beef of the highest quality, taken from prime cuts of forequarter and flank that contain no offal or mechanically recovered meat. In accordance with the latest government statement, we are confident that this beef is safe to consume.

However, our customers' lack of confidence in British beef, the related potential damage to our business and threat to our employees' livelihood has caused us to take the decision to source beef outside the UK until confidence in British beef is fully restored."

From Saturday 30th March, and until further notice, all beefburgers served in Burger King restaurants will be made with non-British beef.

You will still be able to enjoy the BK Chicken Flamer™, Chicken Royale, Spicy Beanburger and all other items on our menu. Naturally, should circumstances change in any way, we will keep you informed through the press and our restaurants.

news

Grand concepts: Rob Lee yesterday working on his sculpture of William Blake's God, destined to join Atlas, Medusa and three other figures at the Natural History Museum's new Earth Galleries which open in South Kensington, London, in July Photograph: José McYeste

Churchill papers purchase was 'vital'

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

Lord Rothschild, chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, yesterday defended himself against charges of squandering lottery money on the £13m purchase of the Churchill archive.

The decision last May to buy the papers from the war leader's family, including the Tory MP Winston Churchill, was one of the first grants by the NHMF, which distributes lottery money for heritage projects.

Lord Rothschild came under attack from some members of the Heritage Select Committee. Joe Ashton, Labour MP for Bassetlaw, said that there had been some doubt whether Winston Churchill. Sir Winston's grandson, was the legal owner of the archive.

"Surely people who spent money on lottery tickets would not have wanted their money to end up in the pockets of Churchill's grandson?" he asked. "There are things in national life which are somehow sacred icons in this country. We helped save the first letters Nelson wrote with his left hand and Wellington's dispatch from the Battle of Waterloo." Lord Rothschild replied.

The select committee disagreed about the value of the purchase. John Maxton, Labour MP for Cathcart, told Lord Rothschild: "You were right to spend that money on acquiring the Churchill papers, but you never should have had to. It was a disgrace that any member of the family should have demanded money for the papers."

Call for agency to stop medical research fraud

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

A UK agency to police allegations of scientific fraud and protect whistle-blowers who inform on colleagues was called for yesterday by Britain's top two medical journals.

In a unique collaboration, *the Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* produced separate leading articles demanding action as a new book detailed more than 70 proven or suspected cases of scientific dishonesty and fraud worldwide.

Britain's medical profession "harbours a culture that prefers to sweep such problems under the carpet", Dr Richard Smith, the *BMJ's* editor said, while Dr Richard Horton, the editor of the *Lancet*, declared that "professional self-regulation has failed".

If Britain's medical and scientific community - the Royal Colleges, the General Medical Council, the Royal Society, the research councils and other bodies who fund research - do not act this time, the government will have to, Dr Smith warned. But an attempt last year to set up such a body foundered when representatives of the Royal Society, the Medical Research Council and the General Medical Council were "scornful" of the proposal, Dr Smith said.

The call has heen given topical urgency by the General Medical Council's decision last week to strike off Dr Geoffrey Fairhurst, a Merseyside GP who was vice-chairman of a medical ethics committee and a former government adviser, who forged patient's consent forms for drug company-sponsored trials which earned him at least £15,000.

It also follows the case last year of Malcolm Pearce, the consultant obstetrician at St George's Hospital, south-west London, who was struck off after falsely claiming to have relocated an ectopic pregnancy - one that begins in the fallopian tube, which transports eggs to the womb - into the womb, producing a successful birth. He also published false claims about a trial involving 191 women in a journal which he edited.

Fraud in medical research is now "pervasive", the *Lancet* said. But the response to scientific misconduct in the UK and many other countries "has been one of casual indifference".

An agency to investigate fraud, review complaints and establish the true prevalence of the problem is "urgently needed", it added.

The article went on to ask: "How many more patients will have to be mistreated and how much more dishonest research will have to be conducted and published before our complacency finally damages the reputation of the medical research community beyond repair?"

The United States, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Austria and Australia all now have "coherent systems" for tackling the problem, Dr Smith said. The US system is a Commission of Research Integrity, set up by Congress and the Department of Health because of the scientific community's inability to deal adequately with misconduct".

Allegations must be fully investigated, with both whistle-blowers and those they accuse treated with "respect, fairness and openness".

A commission could both provide guidelines for institutions and individuals, offer impartial investigation, collect data and sponsor research. Although accurate data are lacking, the *Lancet* said, fraud seems to affect between 1 in 1000 and 4 in 1000 research studies.

Personal ambition, greed, the need to publish to gain recognition and promotion, and league tables of university performance where research income and output is divided by the number of staff all contribute to fraud.

Such frauds can range from the criminally invented, non-existent, study, to minor and sometimes unwitting plagiarism, to simple carelessness, to publishing the same results in different journals and being given authorship of papers to which the researcher has contributed little or nothing. John Howie, Professor of General Practice at Edinburgh University, says in an introduction to his book, *Fraud and Misconduct in Medical Research – the work which has prompted the articles in the medical journals.*

The lack of a career structure for research staff may also contribute, where those in mid-career become expensive to fund but need to continue to appear innovative.

"The temptations are obvious," Prof Howie said. The "fundamental" change needed is to shift the research climate firmly back "from quantity towards quality".

From Piltdown Man to fake drug trials

Scientific fraud dates at least to Piltdown Man who was "discovered" in 1912 and to the charges in the 1970s that Sir Cyril Burt invented data for his seminal study on twins and intelligence. Cases in the past two decades include:

■ William Summerlin, an immunologist at the Sloan-Kettering Institute in New York, who in 1974 faked transplant results in white mice by using a black pen to produce darkened skin patches. If true, the finding would have had huge implications for organ transplantation and immunology.

■ William McBride, an Australian scientist famous for helping expose the thalidomide scandal, who in 1988 was found to have forged data on the action in fetal rabbits of hyoscine, a drug used as a pre-med and anti-emetic before operations. His data appeared to raise a major threat to the drug Debendox.

■ Mark Spector, a 24-year-old Cornell University graduate student was found in 1981 to have faked data on a viral cause of cancer that colleagues predicted would win him the Nobel Prize.

■ Since 1975, 26 cases involving 16 doctors – all but two GPs – have been reported to the GMC for faking data in drug company sponsored trials. Doctors have made up data, faked patients' dates of birth, forged consent signatures, and forged signatures of other participating doctors.

Fraud and Misconduct in Medical Research, Stephen Lock and Frank Wells, BMJ Publishing Group, £29.95

Otters' designer homes mark happy ending to riverbank tale

Open house: One of the riverside apartments built to entice otters back to the River Kennet Photographs: John Voos

ROS WYNNE-JONES

Designer riverside apartments are being built for otters to entice the animals back to the Thames region after pollution forced them to flee in the 1950s

The National Rivers Authority together with wildlife conservation groups in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, are working with the local water authority to re-establish the otters.

"Otters vanished from the area in the late-1950s and 1960s because of excessive river pollution," said a spokesman for Thames Water. "We don't want to artificially re-introduce otters into the area, so we are building homes for them to find."

Each new otter holt consists of an underground chamber measuring two metres square with access, via pipes, to the river and nearby land. The chambers are divided into "rooms" with concrete slabs.

The locations of the holts are being kept secret to protect the otters' privacy, but all are along the river Kennet in Wiltshire. The initiative follows a similar scheme along the upper Thames last year.

Heavenly creatures: Otters were forced away from rivers by pollution in the 1950s

The sites were selected by Mark Satinet, the Kennet Otter Habitat Project Officer with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. "Otters were once found throughout England," he said, "but pollution and habitat loss have caused their numbers to decline rapidly. These new apartments are ideal ... as [otters] are secretive creatures and like dark, quiet places near water." Otters were recently seen in the area for the first time in 20 years. John Lawrence, Thames Water's waste manager, said: "We want to do all we can to make life easier for the otters now they are returning to the region's rivers." Thames Water has invested £550m in improving sewage works in the region and plans to spend another £300m by the turn of the century. "Our investment at sewage treatment works has paved the way for their return ...We hope that new riverside pads will make them feel even more welcome."

Police study guide to catch serial offenders

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

A guide to catching serial killers, multiple rapists, kidnappers and armed robbers, is to be issued to senior detectives for the first time. The confidential manual also supports the use of offender profiling in major investigations and gives a list of recommended psychologists who can be used in trying to track down serial offenders.

Police officers believe that new investigative techniques and modern technology such as DNA sampling will reveal that there are many more serial murderers and rapists than previously thought. They also predict that many major crimes, previously believed to have been one-offs, are linked.

The handbook is being drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers following a number of serial crimes, including the murders carried out by Frederick and Rosemary West, and the case of Michael Sams, who was jailed for life in 1993 for the murder of Julie Dart and the kidnapping of the estate agent Stephanie Slater. The police believe important lessons have been learnt from these types of linked cases. They also want to draw together all the forensic and technological advances of the past decade.

Until this publication the police had not produced their own guide to catching major criminals. In 1983, following the conviction of the Yorkshire Ripper, Peter Sutcliffe, the Home Office produced a circular called *The Investigation of a Series of Major Crimes*, but that it now considered out of date and inadequate.

Among the subjects covered in the book are the latest interview techniques, the use of computerised incident rooms, how to manage a major investigation, training, how the media can help in investigations, and what help detectives can get from the newly-established Crime Faculty.

The book, which will only be available to senior investigating officers, says offender profiling – the technique of predicting the likely characteristics of an offender – can be a useful tool in major investigations. There have been remarkable successes using such techniques, John Duffy, the so-called Railway Murderer who was convicted of rapes and murders near railway lines in London in 1986, was caught as a direct result of a profile compiled by Professor David Canter.

The manual follows a year-long inquiry by a working party of Acpo's crime committee, headed by Detective Chief Superintendent Michael Jenkins, of the West Midlands police.

Inspector Clive Parsons, the group's secretary, said: "You have got to except that we are going to find more links between serious crimes in the future. We are trying to get officers not to treat major crimes as one-offs – we want people to consider links with other incidents. The police now acknowledge that they should be looking for over-all patterns of crime."

news

Royal triumph: Portillo sets up independent trust to preserve seafaring links and architectural and historic integrity of Wren's masterpiece on Thames

University wins bid for naval college site

Plans backed personally by the Prince of Wales were accepted last night as the winning bid to turn the historic Royal Naval College Greenwich into Britain's foremost Baroque site.

Michael Portillo, the Secretary of State for Defence, also announced that an independent trust would be set up to preserve the architectural and historic integrity of the famous site.

There was a nationwide outcry when plans were unveiled to close the naval college which is housed in the twin-domed palace and lease out the buildings. But Mr Portillo delighted conservationists by announcing that the University of Greenwich was the most appropriate contender to be the main occupant, with the National Maritime Museum using certain sections.

Some of the buildings will be converted to provide sheltered accommodation for retired seafarers and their wives or widows.

Dr David Fussey, Vice-Chancellor of Greenwich University, welcomed the announcement. "I am absolutely delighted that the university has been identified as the most appropriate, main occupant of the Royal Naval College site," he said, adding that the maintenance and preservation of the architectural and historical integrity of the site "remains a top priority".

Dr Fussey stressed there would be improved public access to allow both local people and visitors to enjoy part of the nation's great heritage. The university will work alongside the Government in an attempt to secure World Heritage status for Greenwich and transform it into a British Versailles.

Detailed negotiations will now begin to refine the plans to occupy the college site.

Mr Portillo said the independent trust would pay particular attention to the college's historical associations with the Royal Navy, with a senior retired admiral likely to be one of the trustees. He acknowledged the announcement would be a disappointment to the seven other bidders for the 150-year lease.

But he said: "The Government is determined that the future use of the Royal Naval College should be one worthy of the magnificent site and in the best interests of Greenwich Hospital and the nation."

Virginia Bottomley, Secretary of State for National Heritage, said the announcement confirms the Government's commitment to adopt the most effective means for ensuring the future conservation and use of "these exceptional buildings".

Concerns over the future of Greenwich prompted the Prince of Wales to call a meeting with senior ministers and heritage experts in the riverside buildings last November. A spokesman for the prince said he would be "pleased to hear this great news".

It is expected that the maritime museum will use the famed Painted Hall and Chapel, while the university will occupy the other areas for teaching, research and administration.

More than 800 organisations originally expressed an interest in Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece on the Thames. But the size of the building and the strict requirements that ruled out its use for the likes of an hotel put many potential bidders off.

New lease of life: The Royal Naval College whose occupants will include students and retired seafarers Photograph: Brian Harris

Forces sign up to anti-racism action plan

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

Military personnel found guilty of racial discrimination will now face court martial under a plan to stamp out continuing discrimination in the armed forces.

Although the Ministry of Defence yesterday denied allegations of "widespread" racism in in the Army, it signed up to an action plan recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality following a report released yesterday which detailed individual cases of discrimination.

Under the new penalties, courts martial will be considered regardless of whether any other offence has been committed under military law.

Herman Ouseley, chairman of the CRE, said that the agreement with the MoD to try to achieve racial equality should have been concluded "a decade ago". The action plan, signed by Mr Ouseley and the Permanent Under-Secretary at the MoD, Richard Mottram, lays down a strict timetable for the implementation of reforms, including written instructions to all key personnel reminding them of their obligations under the Equal Opportunities Directive; thorough monitoring of the ethnic origins of applicants, a review of the Army's selection tests for soldiers; and special measures to increase recruitment of "visible ethnic minorities" into the Household Cavalry, which now has none.

The 60-page report, focusing on the 1,000-strong Household Cavalry Regiment — formerly the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals — was launched in January 1995. It followed a case where a black soldier who was discouraged from transferring to the Life Guards in 1991 successfully won compensation from the Army. Mr Ouseley said that all the action taken by the Army to achieve racial equality in the past year had been triggered by this formal investigation.

The report found that the MoD had recently introduced an ethnic-monitoring system but had "no usable data". Bob Purkiss, who headed the study, said he had found "serious inadequacies in the ethnic-monitoring systems" which were "so inadequate as to be of no assistance in probing allegations of this kind". Ethnic monitoring started in late 1993 but figures were kept only for the whole Army, not for individual regiments and corps.

The Household Cavalry is Britain's senior regular army unit, dating from 1611 in the Restoration of Charles II. The investigation found it had a preference for officers with a family connection, which could lead to indirect discrimination against ethnic minorities. Only one serving officer, of "Anglo-Indian" origin, could possibly be considered part of the latter. The regiment also had a reputation for not wanting ethnic minority soldiers, which led to direct discrimination. There had been direct discrimination against one soldier posted to the Household Cavalry and against one serving in it.

However, Mr Mottram said "we do not accept, and neither does the report suggest, that there is widespread discrimination in the Army as a whole".

Soldier 'felt an outcast'

The report highlighted the case of 'Soldier A', who joined the Army in 1984. He had one black and one white parent. He recalled that one officer at the selection centre had been concerned at his joining the Household Cavalry and attending the Guards training centre at Pirbright, Surrey. There he encountered 'a barrage of racism'. On the evening of the first day he and another coloured recruit were visited by an instructor who warned them 'You two are going to get problems'. He nicknamed them 'Mustafa Crap' and 'Mustafa Shit'. Numerous incidents followed, sometimes in front of hundreds of other soldiers. The presence of the other ethnic minority recruit helped 'Soldier A', but he left and 'Soldier A' said he then felt a 'complete outcast'. At no time did he ever make an official complaint.

DAILY POEM

Finn's People

By Mairi MacInnes

landed and waited for him
till the moors darkened
and seas grew thick.
After centuries, absentmindedly
and thinking all the while of Finn,
they took off their old grey heads
and threw them to cap a nearby hill
so high and deeply nothing could take root.

They trooped then, headless,
down the path to an unroofed place
settled their feet in the turf
side by side in a ring
and addressed themselves to the future.
By the time Finn came
they'd have turned to stone.
He must have grieved, unpunctual Finn,
to find a set of slabs
that once would have got up to bow
and a cairn of heads
no longer able to weep.

Mairi MacInnes recently resumed a writing career which began in the Fifties. Her latest collection *Elsewhere & Back* (Bloodaxe, 1993), and a second novel, *The Quondam Wives* (Louisiana U.P.), lie this side of a divide in which she brought up a family and worked in the States. *The New Yorker* recently published her account of a lifetime which has been devoted to children and poetry in equal measure.

Adoption law shake-up vows to end race bar

GLENDA COOPER

Prospective parents should no longer be victims of "political correctness" and barred from adoption on grounds of education, race or age, the Government announced yesterday.

In the biggest shake-up in adoption law for 20 years, ministers said they want more parents to consider adoption, along with the options of keeping the baby, or abortion.

Critics claimed this could result in "social engineering" if pressure was brought to bear on single mothers to give their children up for adoption.

Adoptions have fallen by more than half over the last 30 years. In 1977, a year after the Adoption Act, almost 13,000 children were adopted; about 3,000 were babies under a year old. In 1991 the total was 7,000 and fewer than 900 were babies.

The new bill stresses the need to protect the child's welfare. It includes a welfare checklist for agencies and the courts, a new complaints procedure and the right of adopted children to obtain information about their background when they reach 18. Step- and foster-parents will also find it easier to adopt – 50 per cent of adoptions are now by step-parents.

Councils will have a new duty to publicise their range of adoption services and encourage more families to consider adoption, particularly families from ethnic communities.

The Health Minister, John Bowis, said: "I want to see a system which safeguards children without the tangle of red tape and the roadblock of political correctness. There is no room for ruling out adoptive parents on such grounds of education, age or race."

Cases that caught national attention include Jim and Rosa Lawrence, from Cromer, Norfolk who were told they could not adopt a mixed-race child because of their "lack of understanding of racial issues". Mrs Lawrence was born to an Asian family in Guyana.

Hammersmith and Fulham refused one couple the right to adopt a Chinese child because they would be unable to ensure links with "China's rich culture".

Eighteen months ago, an adoption agency run by Kent social services said couples who had unprotected sex, smoked, were over the age of 37, or overweight, would be considered only for older children and those with special needs.

Felicity Collier, director of the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, said: "The picture of adoption workers withholding children from desperate families is cruel and misleading."

Mr Bowis insisted the best place for a child was with its natural parents and there was no intention to put pressure on single mothers. But Brian Waller, chairman of the ADSS Children and Families committee, said: "It feels like social engineering, which is not what adoption should be about.

"It's counter-productive to try to pressure parents. If they do give up their baby, it can stay with them for the rest of their lives. There are very unhappy adults with serious mental health problems because of the pressure they were put under 20, 30 years ago."

Rugby prop denies blame

A young rugby player alleged to have collapsed the scrum which resulted in the paralysis of an opponent yesterday denied any responsibility for his injury.

Ben Smoldon, 21, is claiming £1m damages for the 1991 accident during a game between Sutton Coldfield and Burton on Trent under-19 Colts, which left him confined to a wheelchair.

Mr Smoldon, of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, a hooker, claims the referee, Michael Nolan, and Burton's tight head prop, Thomas Whitworth, were to blame. He alleges that Mr Nolan did not take proper control of the match, and that Mr Whitworth was aggressive and contributed to the collapse of the scrums by taking the players' shoulders below hip height. He believes his injury was caused by Mr Whitworth moving out of position.

Mr Whitworth, 22, of Lower Leigh, Staffordshire, told Mr Justice Curtis that Mr Smoldon came into the scrums with a "forceful" attitude.

He said that Mr Nolan offered advice during the match on how to maintain a stable scrummage: "He told us 'Be careful. Use common sense. Crouch, touch, pause, engage. Use due care while engaging. Keep the scrums high'."

He said he was told that Mr Smoldon was hooking the ball in the scrum with his left hand rather than his feet. Because of that, he held Mr Smoldon's hand during a few scrums, but did not do so in the one in which he was injured. All he could remember of that scrum — which collapsed almost at once — was himself, the rest of his front row and Mr Smoldon on the floor.

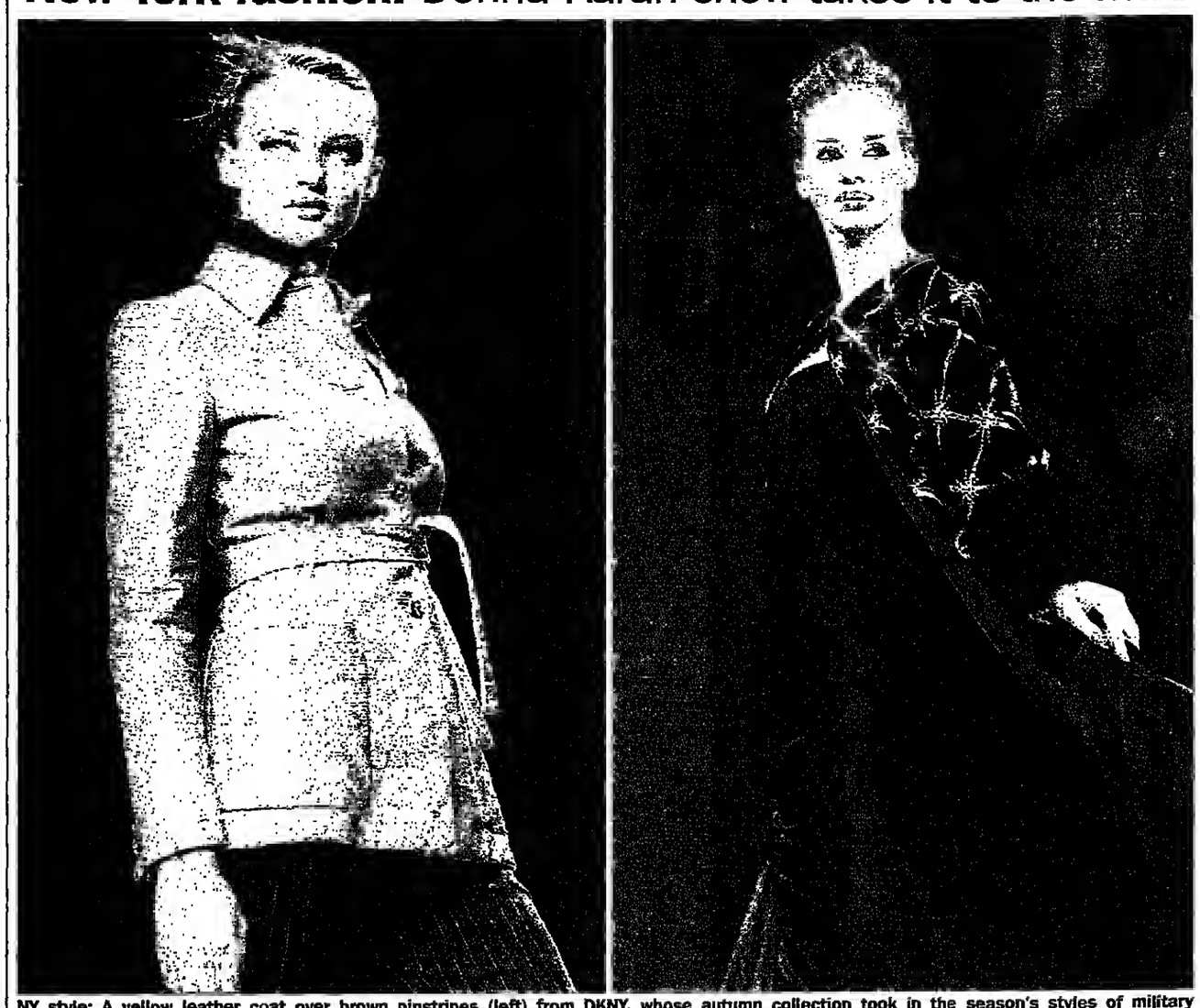
Immediately before its collapse he maintained his normal scrummage position. He dismissed as "untrue" suggestions put by his counsel, Christopher Symons QC, that he had deliberately collapsed or lowered the scrums, head-butted or punched an opponent or dropped his left shoulder and "bored in" towards Mr Smoldon.

Mr Symons: "During this collapse, or immediately after, or after the match and in the weeks that followed, did anyone point a finger of blame at you?"

Mr Whitworth: "No sir."

The hearing continues today.

New York fashion: Donna Karan show takes it to the maxi



NY style: A yellow leather coat over brown pinstripes (left) from DKNY, whose autumn collection took in the season's styles of military detailing and maxi coats, and (right) a silk velvet-beaded coat with brown fox fur cuffs from Donald Deal Photographs: Mark Cardwell / Joe Tabacca

Top presenters go as Talk Radio flounders

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

Talk Radio UK plunged into further turmoil yesterday after revelations that its political presenter, Trevor McDonald, has decided to quit and Simon Bates, the former Radio 1 disc jockey, had been axed.

Jonathan King, who hosted the mid-morning show, has also been told that his contract at the national radio station will not be renewed as it struggles to contain losses of up to £1m a month.

The decision to sack Mr Bates – who was hired at a salary of £120,000 a year – followed a 10 per cent drop in audience figures to just over 300,000 for his breakfast show which began last October. Surprisingly perhaps, research showed that listeners did not like his most famous contribution, Our Tune, which had won a lucrative sponsorship deal with Kleenex.

"It was just not popular. People who listened to Bates did not want to know. Audience figures fell by 8 per cent when it came on," a Talk Radio insider said. The DJ is now consulting his lawyers.

Trevor McDonald, who anchors *News at Ten*, only managed to pull in 100,000 listeners for his flagship Sunday morning political show.

The axing of the big-name presenters represents yet another U-turn for the national commercial station, which hired them last year after its launch concept of "shock-jock" radio proved a flop.

Now struggling to maintain audiences of under 2 million — compared to 4.6 million for Classic FM and 4.2 million for Virgin Radio, its only two national rivals – it is now on to its third attempt at a fresh start under the management of Travis Baxter, managing director of CLT, which runs the station. Jason Bryant, the third programme director of the station since it began in February last year, said: "I want to put a line-up of presenters together which appeals to the public. It sounds easy to do, but it isn't."

news

Railtrack warned over Forth Bridge repairs

Safety survey: Checks reveal 'significant deterioration'

Rail chiefs were yesterday ordered to improve maintenance of the 100-year-old Forth Bridge, oear Edinburgh.

The Health and Safety Executive said the mile-loog hridge – which carries 1,000 trains a week over the river Forth – was still safe. hut Railtrack needed to repair existing damage and step up maintenance procedures.

The assessment by the HSE was prompted by public concern about the condition of the hridge which hos recently heen shedding large flakes of red paint.

The report said: "The bridge is over 100 years old and some deterioration in its condition is to be expected. However, the assessment has indicated tbat over many years tbe maintenance system has not been robust enough to prevent significant deterioration in certain areas of the bridge."

Engineers from HM Railway Inspectorate carried out a survey of the condition of the bridge – a hazard analysis and structural study. In their judgement the bridge was safe in its current condition to carry Railtrack's present loading.

Although the bridge has been allowed to deteriorate, its structur ' integrity was not compromised. Its carrying capacity in its present condition complied with modern standards of safe desigr for bridges. The existing maintenance regime needed improvement if deterioration was to be stopped aod potential structural problems in the future were to be avoided, the study said.

Sam Robertson, chief inspecting officer of railways, said he was not alarmed by the survey, but added: "We were dissatisfied, disappointed, concerned to find that parts of the hridge had been allowed to deteriorate with no apparent maintenance over long periods and this was confirmed hecause of a complete lack of records."

He explained that when Railtrack took responsibility for tbe bridge two years ago they found hig gaps in maintenance records.

"Clearly it indicates a lack of care on the part of people responsible at the time."

Railtrack now has to meet several requirements including completing an overall survey of the bridge's condition, and establishing a full understanding of how the bridge and in particular its bearings – which allow contraction and expansion – were designed to work.

It will also bave to complete a structural assessment of the bridge and prepare an action plan for restoration and repairs. Railtrack will also have to prepare a maintenance plan to cover the future upkeep and monitoring of the bridge's condition.

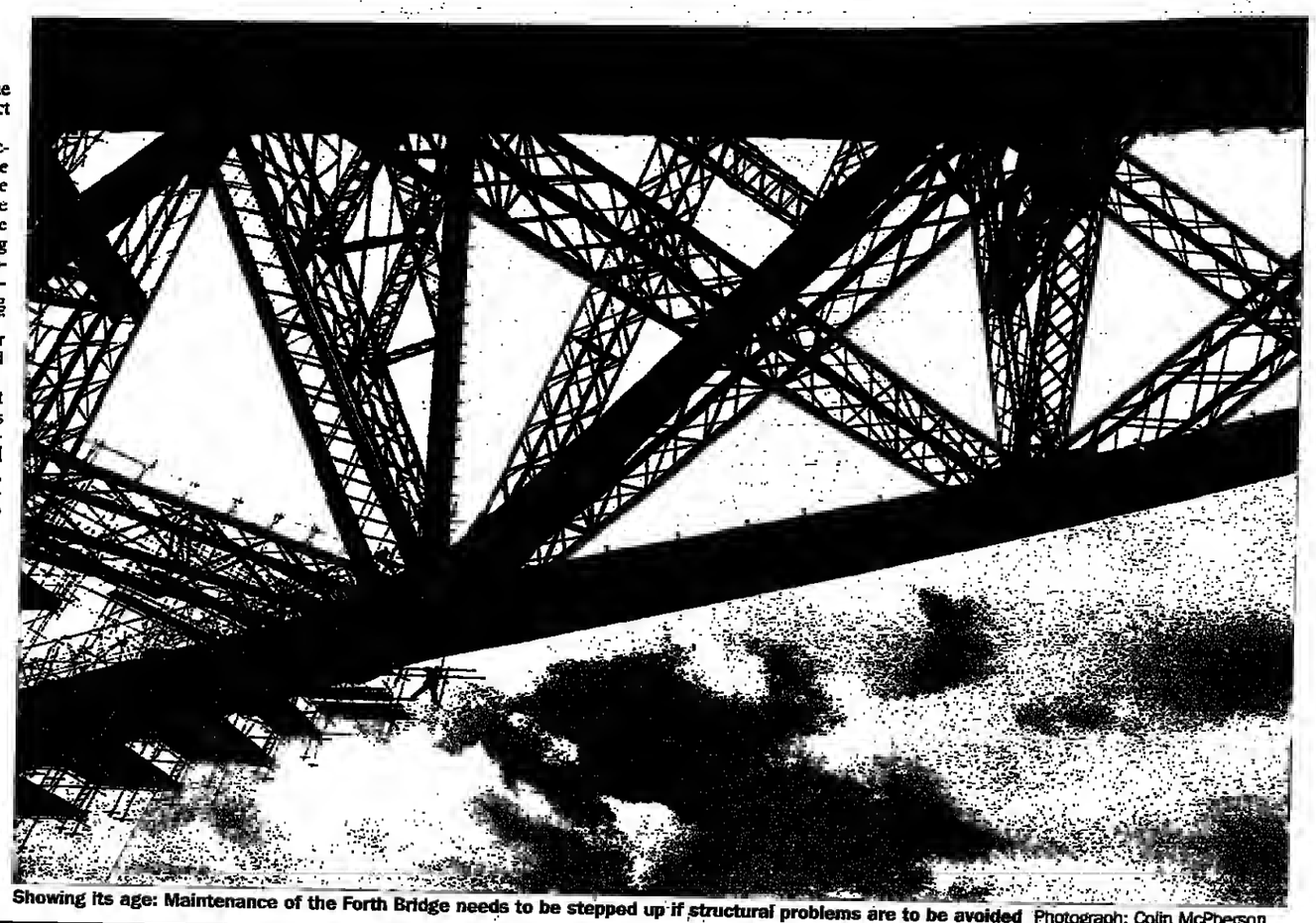
Mr Robertson said that the HSE had given Railtrack formal notice of its intention to issue improvement notices in respect of these items.

The report said some secondary sections, steel angle straps, were so rusted they were brokeo through and had to be replaced. Some parts of the bridge had oo paint or coating other than the oil treatment applied when it was built. "A significant backlog of paioting work needs to be addressed." Betweeo 50 per cent and 70 per cent of the bridge required some sort of coating.

The survey showed the paint applied over the last 100 years was no longer providing adequate protection to the steel underneath. "In recent years, grit-blasting had been used to remove old paint, but this had also removed the original oil and coating from the steel which gave a degree of protection.

Railtrack said it would be spending more than £3m on the bridge in the next financial year. A spokesman said: "We too have carried out an in-depth analysis on the carrying capacity and condition of the bridge and we are preparing a maintenance plan which will preserve the bridge indefinitely."

The statement added: "Railtrack welcomes the Health and Safety Executive's report and its acknowledgment that the Forth Bridge is safe, its integrity is oot compromised and that it complies with modern standards of safe design."



Showing its age: Maintenance of the Forth Bridge needs to be stepped up if structural problems are to be avoided Photograph: Colin McPherson

Cash crisis may force cutbacks at Amnesty

PAUL FIELD

Amnesty International in the UK may be forced to scale down or even cancel important campaigns on human rights violations around the world because of a financial crisis.

The UK sectioo of the international movement suffered a drop io income last year and oow needs to raise £600,000 within a month to fund campaigns on China, torture and the death penalty. Managemeot has already drawn up cootingeocy plans which will involve slashing budgets if the money is not found.

In an effort to bolster funds, Amnesty's treasurer, Martin Lubieniecki, has written to the organisation's 127,000 members in the UK: "If we don't raise this money in time, then Amnesty will be forced to take a back seat on many critical campaigns in 1996. We've never had to do that before. The fact is that if Amnesty is not there to stand up and shout for human rights wherever they are being abused in the world, no one will be."

David Bull, director of the UK section, said: "I have beeo with the organisation for five and a half years and we have oever beeo in this positioo in that time." Although plans had beeo drawn up in case the shortfall oo its proposed budget of £7.7m was not made up, he said he was "confideot the membership would respond".

£220,000 award for victim of police assault

A hairdresser was yesterday awarded £220,000 damages after a jury decided that he was assaulted by police and wrongly arrested.

Kenneth Shu, 32, claimed he was attacked by police when he refused to let them into his London home without a warrant in July 1992.

The Metropolitan Police confirmed the award, which Mr Shu's lawyer said was a record payout, but a spokeswoman said: "We are likely to appeal against the size of the award rather than the verdict." She was unable to say if an investigation is to be set up into the conduct of officers involved.

Police had gone to his home over a dispute involving a tenant. He was arrested after refusing to allow the officers in.

As Mr Shu celebrated his victory today, his lawyer, Sidiq Khan, said: "My client was grabbed by the arms which were twisted up his back and then handcuffed behind him. He was also held in a neck lock, which is now illegal and not taught to police officers.

"They punched and kicked him in the van and he was kicked in the kidneys. Another policeman used his back as a footstool and the driver turned round and insulted him verbally saying he had got no more than he deserved. The charge officer told him, 'I've never arrested a Chink before'.

"When he was released at 11pm that night they threw him into the street in just jeans and flip-flops. He had to walk two miles home, because they refused to let him call a taxi."

Mr Khan said when Mr Shu reached his home, the front door was wide open and his stereo and other property had been stolen.

Doctors at London's King's College Hospital found that Mr Shu had extensive bruising to his back and kidneys. He was passing blood and decided to make a formal complaint to the Police Complaints Commission. Although a police surgeon confirmed the injuries, the complaint was rejected and the hairdresser then decided to sue.

Following a four-day civil hearing at Central London County Court, the jury decided in Mr Shu's favour and awarded him £20,000 in compensatory damages and £200,000 in exemplary damages.

A statement on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Condon said: "We believe the award in this case to be excessive and we are looking to appeal against the size of the award but not the verdict." An application to appeal was lodged with the court almost at once. A police spokeswoman added: "No disciplinary action has or will be taken against the officers involved and none is planned. They continue with their normal duties."

The 32-year-old hairdresser who arrived in London from Hong Kong nine years ago, later said: "Finally I've got justice. I'm really happy with what the jury have done. I feel terribly relieved."

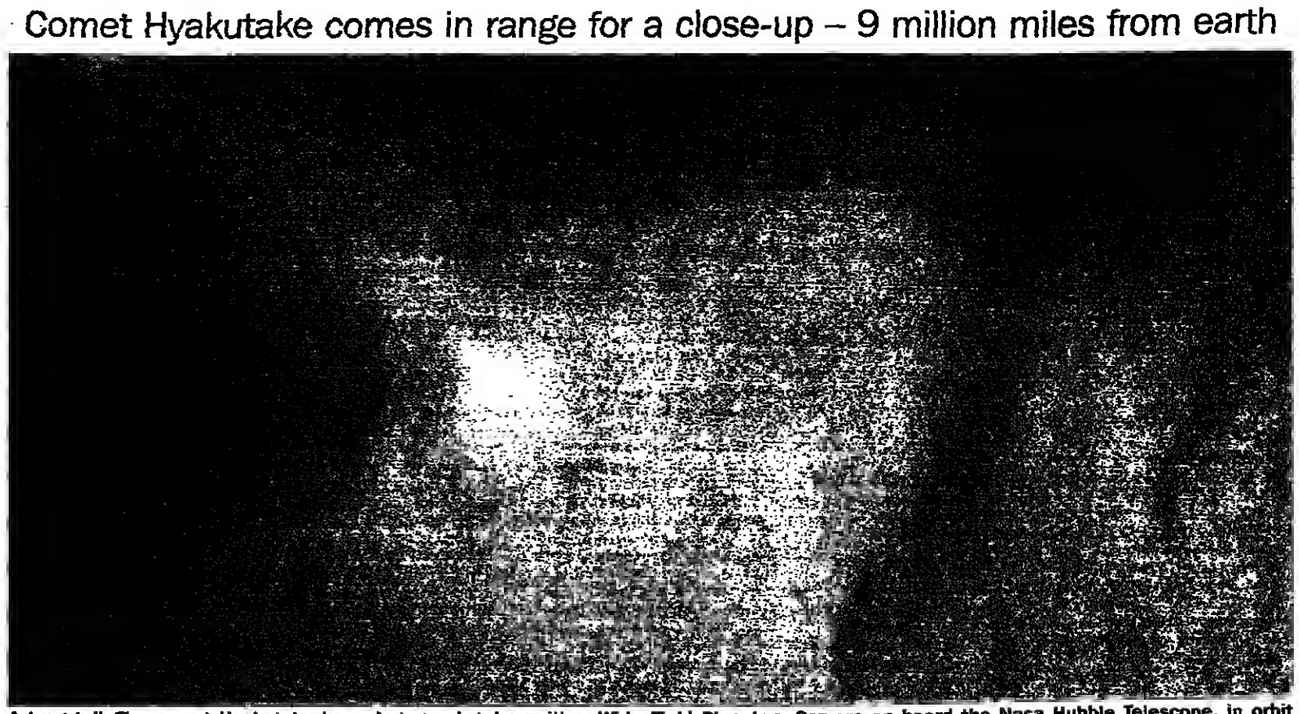
He said: "I still don't understand why the police did what they did. The past three-and-a-half years have been like hell for me. Every time I thought about what happened, it was just anger.

"I hope this money will send a very strong message to the police. If it had been only £3,000 or £4,000 it would have been different. I'm sure it will make a difference for the future.

"I need a break after this week. Every single detail was gone through in court. It was really exhausting. Psychologically, it has been difficult for me."

He added: "Now I feel happiness and depression. Happiness because my case came to court and people believed my story, depression because of all the lies."

Comet Hyakutake comes in range for a close-up – 9 million miles from earth



A long tail: The comet Hyakutake in a photograph taken with a Wide Field Planetary Camera on board the Nasa Hubble Telescope, in orbit round the earth, on Monday when the comet was 9.3 million miles distant. The image covers en eree 2,070 miles across Photograph: Nasa

PC found guilty of karate attack

A Scottish police officer was yesterday found guilty of launching an unprovoked karate attack on a teenager being held in police cells.

The hearing at Aberdeen Sheriff Court was told how Constable Colin Leask a 29-year-old martial arts expert, kicked 19-year-old Kevin McGeachy in the groin before launching a flurry of blows to the suspect's head and finally throwing him to the ground.

Leask, who took up karate and martial arts when he was 12-years-old, had denied the assault which took place last July.

The court was told that Mr McGeachy had been arrested for drugs offences and taken to Grampian police headquarters in Aberdeen for a strip search.

Other officers in the cells witnessed Leask carrying out the attack which left the teenager lying on the ground bleeding heavily from the head.

Giving evidence on his own behalf yesterday Leask, who weighs 18 stone, claimed he had only used self-defence techniques on Mr McGeachy because he feared he was about to be attacked. Leask, who gave a demonstration in court of the martial arts skills he claims to have used on Mr McGeachy, said his punching power amounted to three times his body weight and could cause serious injuries to opponents.

Sheriff Graeme Warner deferred sentence until 15 April for social inquiry and community service reports.

Convicted killer rejects parole in denial of guilt

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

A man jailed for a killing he says he did not commit, will today refuse to leave Long Lartin jail at the end of his prison sentence in a protestation of his innocence.

Patrick McCann – jailed largely on the evidence of his own family – says he will decline to leave the cell where he has served six years of a 10-year sentence, until Michael Howard, the Home Secretary refers his case back to the Court of Appeal or his innocence is established.

The move presents the Prison Service coping with overcrowded jails with an unusual problem. Usually those refusing to leave do so, because of personal reasons – fear, agoraphobia, difficulties at home – and counselling normally works. A spokeswoman said yesterday: "We would treat a protest in the same way and hope that solves the problem."

McCann, 40, was jailed in June, 1990 for the manslaughter of Richard Holdsworth, in Cardiff after a drunken hinge with his family. He was accused of suffocating Holdsworth and robbing him of cash. A previous trial had to be abandoned after a jury could not agree a verdict.

But according to McCann's supporters, the case against him was always weak.

There was evidence suggesting that Mr Holdsworth may have died of natural causes.

Further, there was no forensic evidence linking McCann to Mr Holdsworth's flat. Of the 167 items tested none put him at the scene of the crime, but there was evidence, including fingerprints, placing his accusers in the flat. They included his sisters, Bridget and Susan.

The credibility of these witnesses has since been called into question. Susan was sentenced to four years for robbery after Mr Holdsworth's money was found in her possession – she claimed McCann had given it to her – but she has since absconded from jail and is now believed to be living in Ireland.

And medical records show that Bridget – who has since died and whose evidence about the killing was crucial to McCann's conviction – revealed she suffered alcoholic neuropathy. From tape-recordings of her interviews with police, experts have now concluded that she betrayed signs of being open to suggestibility.

This new evidence was submitted to Mr Howard last year, asking him to refer the case to the Court of Appeal. The file is still under consideration. In the meantime, McCann maintains he will not leave prison on parole.

He said yesterday: "I have protested my innocence from day one. The case against me was absolutely ridiculous. I should never have been charged when forensic evidence proved that I had not even been into Mr Holdsworth's flat and all of my accusers have been in it.

"I want to clear my name for my children's sake."

news

GPs told to ask more for non-core services

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Family doctors are being told they should stop providing care for patients in nursing and residential homes and for highly dependent patients living at home unless they are paid extra for the work.

A document being sent to all 35,000 family doctors says they should also decline to advise health authorities on purchasing health care, should not take blood, treat minor injuries, remove stitches after operations, provide home care after day case surgery, prescribe a range of expensive and hi-tech drugs, undertake vasectomies, or treat piles by injection without a contract to do so from health authorities or other purchasers.

The work – all of which is already undertaken by at least some GPs – should not be undertaken without extra payment, according to the British Medical Association's family doctors' committee. The advice comes in a paper which will become BMA policy if approved at a conference in June.

The aim is to provide a restricted definition of what the existing GPs' "core contract" is ahead of negotiations with Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, over a new deal aimed at shifting into general practice more work traditionally done in hospitals.

GPs' leaders complain that significant amounts of hospital work – such as longer term care of the elderly – have already slid into general practice with, in most cases, no extra payment. Defining a "core contract" before discussion on the transfer of other work – such as minor injury centres, care for the mentally ill and more complex drug and diagnostic techniques – is "crucial" according to Dr Ian Bogle, chairman of the BMA's general medical services committee, which is warning of falling recruitment to general practice and low morale.

The BMA cannot instruct GPs to stop doing the work – but its advice is that if "health authorities do not wish to purchase this work, then it won't be done", Dr Bogle says.

For providing some items – care in nursing and residential homes, or hormone implants – GP leaders may seek national negotiations. Other items from the list include mentally ill patients under supervision orders, varicose-vein ligation and screening for diabetes, induced eye disease other than glaucoma, a range of more serious minor surgical procedures.

The paper's recommendations provide "a weapon for GPs to use with their health authorities in local negotiations", a spokesman for the BMA said. It is issuing the guidance unilaterally, not planning to negotiate with the Department of Health over it.

Family doctors choosing to provide the "non-core" services should be convinced they are financially attractive and that they offer a reasonable profit margin. "The end result should be an increase in GP income," the document says.

Defining the "core" service enables GPs to say no to new work, but yes "if they consider it to be appropriate and if sufficient resources are available."

The document concedes there are risks in attempting to define in a more restrictive way the work of family doctors. GPs' clinical freedom to choose what services patients receive could be reduced, management may take a more intrusive interest in their work and others may compete to provide non-core services.

Sixties sensation: Ball chair designed by Eero Aarnio in 1965 (est. £2,200-£2,800) having an airing in New Bond Street yesterday before auction at Sotheby's sale of post-1930s design on 1 April Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Son of Nigerian activist loses asylum appeal

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

A man whose pro-democracy activist father has "disappeared" since being deported to his native Nigeria has failed in his bid at the Court of Appeal to remain in the UK.

Ade Onibiyo had claimed his life could be at risk if he too were sent to Nigeria where his father, Abdul, 54, "vanished without trace" following his own forced removal last October. But three judges yesterday upheld the Home Secretary's refusal to grant Mr Onibiyo political asylum.

However, in an important asylum test case decision, the judges ruled that, contrary to the Home Office's contention, asylum seekers did have a right to make a second application for refugee status during a single stay in the UK. Mr Howard had legally and properly exercised his powers in concluding there was no "fresh claim" for asylum.

The Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Bingham, sitting with two other judges, refused Mr Onibiyo leave to appeal to the House of Lords, but his lawyers will now ask the Law Lords direct to hear the case.

In the mean time the student, who has been in detention at Campsfield, in Oxfordshire, for a year, will not be sent back to Nigeria.

Sir Thomas said Ade Onibiyo had relied on his father's disappearance and evidence of civil rights abuses in Nigeria, including the execution last November of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other pro-democracy activists in Nigeria. But he added: "There is, however, no evidence that the applicant's father has been detained, and the Nigeria High Commission has publicly asserted that he has not been detained." It was extremely unlikely that there would be "officially inspired" persecution of a young man who had not set foot in Nigeria since the age of 11, and who had not pursued any political activity of any kind during his long stay in the UK, he said.

But outside court, Mr Onibiyo's sister, Lola, said she was now fearful that her brother and other members of her family could suffer the same fate as her father. "We are being asked by the British Government to prove that our father is safe but we cannot get any evidence out of Nigeria." She said that her mother, Joyce, and two younger sisters now faced deportation.

The Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn said: "The Onibiyo campaign has won an important case for every other asylum seeker. But the family is being asked to prove a negative in order to win asylum for Ade."

MPs seek 'spy master' for intelligence services

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

An all-party committee yesterday clashed with the Prime Minister over the threat to British spies caused by a Russian mole in the American Central Intelligence Agency.

The appointment of a ministerial "spy master" with responsibility for MI5, MI6 and GCHQ, the Government communications headquarters, was also raised by members of the committee as a possible solution to past failures properly to disseminate intelligence information around Whitehall.

The Security and Intelligence Committee, chaired by Tom King, a former Cabinet minister, warned that British agents' lives could have been lost after secrets were betrayed by Aldrich Ames, a CIA officer, and claimed that ministers had been inadequately briefed.

"We are seriously concerned over the extent and nature of the damage that has been done to British interests by the traitorous activities of the CIA officer Aldrich Ames," said the committee. It was also worried that "tainted" intelligence had been passed to ministers by agents compromised by Ames.

But John Major brushed aside the fears of the committee, which he set up. He said in a letter that after reviewing the evidence, "damage to the UK was not great" and he was satisfied that ministers "were adequately briefed". The Prime Minister added: "These are serious issues and I look forward to seeing your conclusions following your further investigations into these matters."

The committee complained in its annual report published yesterday that the British intelligence services had launched their own inquiry into the damage caused by the Ames affair in November 1995 – almost two years after his treachery was first exposed.

Archie Hamilton, a former defence minister and a member of the committee, said: "We are concerned that he was an extremely bad agent. He used to get drunk; he fell asleep in the office; he had an expensive car and a large house; nobody checked on this; he merely said his wife was very rich. It does cause great concern for anyone who has to look at the security organisation."

The committee reported that Ames had identified 13 CIA agents in Russia; nine were executed and three were imprisoned. "It is vital that all possible lessons are learnt on the security aspects of this case with the minimum of delay."

The report highlighted a failure in the present ministerial structure to have a proper overview of the security and intelligence services. The agencies reported to senior ministers who had other responsibilities.

Lord Howe, a former Foreign Secretary, said he had been given an overview of the intelligence and security services for the first time as a member of the committee, although MI6 and GCHQ had reported to him when he was a Cabinet minister.

Mr King said that no minister, with the exception of the Prime Minister, had an overview of the intelligence information being supplied by MI5, MI6 and GCHQ. In Germany, there was a minister with responsibility for the intelligence and security services.

The Prime Minister promised to improve the dissemination of intelligence information around Whitehall in the wake of the Scott report into the arms-to-Iraq affair.

By-election battle: Labour leader tours seat while launching training policy

Blair plugs in for the campaign to come

JOHN RENTOUL

Live wire: Labour leader Tony Blair during a satellite link from a Tamworth factory yesterday Photograph: Steve Hill

Tony Blair raised the stakes in the Staffordshire South East by-election yesterday by in effect admitting that Labour could not afford to fail to win the seat from the Conservatives.

"This is a very important campaign," he told party workers. "We can't take anything for granted."

The Labour leader, with his eyes increasingly focused on a possible October general election, launched the party's modest but specific training plans in Tamworth, the core of the seat vacated by the death of the Tory MP Sir David Lightbown.

In a dry run for the technology which will dominate the general election, Mr Blair spoke to a news conference in London via a satellite link.

Mr Blair used a computer-aided machine tools workshop in Tamworth as a backdrop for his announcement of a £150 training grant each for one million workers, provided they contribute £25.

Labour has tried to fight the by-election as a government in waiting. Gavin Strang, the shadow agriculture minister, on Wednesday interrupted a photo-call on a dairy farm in the constituency to telephone Franz Fischler, the European agriculture commissioner, to demand EU assistance for stricken cattle farmers.

But the beef scare has blown apart the Tory strategy for the by-election, which was to build on party unity on Europe and continuing economic good news with their tough, ex-army candidate, Jimmy James.

At the edge-of-town Sainsbury's, it is only the hard-core who are buying beef or voting Tory. One former Tory voter said she would not be voting for Mr James. "They've known about beef for a long time and they must have known it would come out. They hoped they could fluff their way through, but I'm not buying any."

Tamworth is quintessential new Labour territory. A pleasant, prosperous Midlands town surrounded by large Birmingham commuter houses. The people are fed up with the Government and the Labour council, whose leader Brian Jenkins is the party's candidate, has achieved the highest accolade possible – no one has a bad word to say about it.

Labour's dilemma is that it won a similar West Midlands seat, Dudley West, from the Tories with a record post-war swing of 29 per cent in December 1994. Anything less than that could be portrayed as a recovery by the Tories. But even before the beef scare, a Birmingham *Evening Mail* poll conducted in the street had given Labour 66 per cent, 50 points ahead of the Tories on 16 with the Liberal Democrats third on 13 per cent.

The Liberal Democrats' Jeannette Davy, meanwhile, treads the logically challenged line of admitting her chances are slim – "If we don't win here, we would like to get as many votes as possible" – and that she "would like to see a general election as soon as possible", without endorsing a Labour win as her next-best outcome.

□ Staffordshire South East 1992 general election: D Lightbown (C) 29,180; B Jenkins (Lab) 21,988; G Penlington (Lib Dem) 5,540. Conservative majority 7,192.

Spying makes a comeback as Russia seeks Britain's secrets

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

Increasing numbers of Russian spies are being sent to Britain to obtain information about military, economic and political targets, according to a report published by MI5 yesterday. The second information booklet issued by the Security Service also states that Irish terrorism is still the single largest threat.

The book is part of the service's attempt to be more open and comes as Dame Stella Rimington hands over her post as Director-General of MI5 to Stephen Lander.

Among a review of MI5's work it says that although the threat of espionage from the former Soviet Union has greatly diminished, there has been a recent upsurge in spying by Russia and other countries.

The report says: "In the UK, after a period of initial retrenchment following the rise to power of President Yeltsin, both the Russian civilian and military intelligence services have renewed their efforts to post intelligence officers to London." It adds that the majority of spies are run by foreign handlers based in Britain.

Counter-espionage takes up about a quarter of MI5's efforts. The service employs about 2,000 people and has a budget of £800m. Fighting international terrorism takes up about a third of its resources and Irish terrorism absorbs 39 per cent – down 5 per cent since last year. This trend is expected to be reversed since the breaking of the IRA ceasefire last month.

Under a Bill currently going through Parliament, MI5 will for the first time be allowed to investigate traditional serious crime, such as money laundering. Among some of its other current work is the investigation of attempts by foreign countries to obtain material and expertise for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons from Britain.

EMU rift overshadows push for closer union

ANDREW GUMBEL
Turin
IMRE KARACS
Bonn

BUILDING EUROPE

Today's European summit meeting in Turin may be meant to concentrate on overhauling and harmonising the Union's institutions, but a shadow has been cast over the proceedings by deep differences between member states over the increasingly delicate creation of a single currency.

The issue symbolises one of the basic difficulties which the Inter-Governmental Conference faces: how to build a European Union which is flexible enough to admit diversity, yet solid enough not to disintegrate. By creating a plan that meant some states would enter monetary union, while others would not, the Maastricht treaty also created the germ of a two-speed Europe.

The issue of monetary union, which had lain dormant for some time, returned this week when a Franco-German summit in the south of France laid down plans to create a new currency regime to accommodate countries whose economies were not strong enough to join the single currency at its launch date in 1999.

The proposal, known as EMS 2, has been greeted with scepticism in the countries most likely to be forced to join it, and faces an immediate credibility problem because Britain, which has already opted out of the single currency, wants nothing to do with it.

According to a well-placed official banking source, the project may be economically viable but will almost certainly be politically unacceptable unless Britain can be persuaded to take part. Countries such as Italy, which are nowhere near meeting the convergence criteria for monetary union, will need some persuading that the system is in their interests and not just a palliative disguising Franco-German domination of the EU.

"This is a system that stands no chance of working," the former Italian prime minister and economic expert, Giuliano Amato, said yesterday, querying the wisdom of reviving a currency regime battered to pieces in the financial marketplace in 1992.

All this indicates that the relationship between Europe's hard core and its outer layer will prove more difficult to handle than anticipated.

Karl Lamers, foreign affairs spokesman of Germany's governing Christian Democrats and a key associate of Mr Kohl, has in the past advocated the creation of a "hard core" of states within the EU, committed to deeper political integration than laggards, such as Britain.

But in a paper presented on the eve of the Turin summit by him and Wolfgang Schäuble, the deputy leader of the Christian Democrats, there was little evidence of this zeal. Member states should be allowed to develop varying depths of integration within the union, it said, "but the core is not impenetrable".

"We need a vanguard," the paper said. Euro-sceptic states ought not to hinder deeper integration among the "vanguard", nor should they be locked out of an élite club.

This is a far cry from the vision outlined by Mr Lamers two years ago, which would have relegated Britain to a second division in Europe. Since then, Germany has had to lower its sights, partly because it has not found support for its goals in other EU states, but mainly because it has been diverted from this course by its preoccupations with the more immediate task of ensuring Europe's common currency is born on time.

These issues are likely to be relegated to the sidelines at Turin; indeed the Italian Foreign Ministry, which is organising the event, has been doing its best to ensure the occasion passes off as uneventfully as possible.

But the subject of monetary union is likely to come into the open at a two-day meeting of European economic and finance ministers in Verona next month, and remain on the agenda for several months.

For all the talk of establishing "flexibility" in the EU's founding treaties to cope with the enlargement of Europe to 20 or 30 states, monetary union has already created the need for such flexibility. But it has not delivered the mechanisms to let it happen.

In the longer term, whatever the IGC decides, everyone in Turin knows it is the geometry of monetary union that will shape the Union long after this meeting is forgotten.

Flag day: A policeman outside the conference centre in Turin. Over 5,000 officers will be deployed to ensure security

Labour shows sceptical side

NICOLE VEASH

Fifty Labour MPs have called on Tony Blair to rule out a single currency, warning that monetary union would require huge cuts in British jobs and services.

The signed demand is one of the first indications since Mr Blair became party leader of the potential level of unrest if he were to take Britain into a single currency as prime minister. Nearly one in five of the party's MPs supported the "Europe Isn't Working" statement.

Alan Simpson, MP for Nottingham South, said a single currency would lead to high levels of unemployment and would drag the country into a "bigger hole" without the consent of the British people. "The European agenda should be the people's agenda and not the bankers' agenda. Our campaign is about democracy and not just economics."

Denzil Davies, a former Treasury minister and MP for Llanelli, said his party's early European euphoria had ended. And he warned that if Labour won the election, Gordon Brown would have to address single currency factors in his first Budget as Chancellor. "It's something we can't run away from. If we go into government as a party without a clear view, this issue would dominate right from the beginning," he said.

Signatories to the statement include Diane Abbott, Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone, and Peter Shore.

They claim the cost of introducing the single currency in jobs and services would be equivalent to cutting half of all NHS trusts, or all secondary schools and two-thirds of primaries, or the entire cost of fire service and law and order provision in Britain – estimated at £12bn. "Stuck with mass unemployment and deflationary economics, the Euro would be the breaking of Europe, not its binding," the statement argued.

But suggestions that the Eurosceptics would be willing to do deals with counterparts on the Tory benches were dismissed. "We don't have a common purpose," Mr Simpson said.

The development was seized upon, however, by the Tory chairman Brian Mawhinney, who said: "For months, they seek to create the impression that the party is united in its mad dash towards transferring powers from Westminster to Brussels. Here again Labour is saying one thing and doing another."

TURIN CONFERENCE

Beef crisis brings Britain into EU fold

SARAH HELM
Turin

BSE FALL OUT

"We can best shape our national destiny by working in partnership with our closest neighbours," wrote John Major in his forward to the Government's White Paper on Europe three weeks ago. "Europe," he declared, should be about "co-operation, shared purpose" and "common enterprise".

The statements will return to haunt the Prime Minister today at the launch in Turin of the inter-governmental conference on European reform.

Britain's willingness to work in partnership with Europe has always been doubted by other members. Rarely, however, has its insularity or inability to understand the problems of its European partners been so starkly exposed as since the crisis broke last week over British beef.

European officials and veterinary scientists are still fuming over the failure of the British Government to give the Commission prior warning of the BSE announcement to the Commons 10 days ago. Two days earlier European agriculture ministers had met in Brussels, but Douglas Hogg, Britain's representative, had failed to attend. Britain already knew the beef scare was about to break but Franz Fischler, the agriculture commissioner, heard the news via the media.

Had Britain consulted with the Commission, officials say a co-operative way of resolving the crisis might have been found. Whether the export ban could have been averted is doubtful, but it might have been less Draconian. Prior warning would have given Britain's partners time to help draw up a considered response which might have prevented public fear spreading through Europe. It is this fear, and the inevitable collapse in consumer confidence, that has necessitated the world-wide ban.

Why did Britain not consult? Surely, given the country's massive beef export trade to Europe the Government must have considered the impact of the health scare for European consumers and markets. Commission officials say all the evidence suggests that the Government never once considered the European dimension. "It was not simply that they didn't care ... Europe simply didn't enter their calculations," said one.

The imposition of the EU beef export ban has inevitably provoked howls of anti-European protest in Britain. But from the European perspective the necessity for some sort of ban was clear. The measure was not imposed to punish Britain, but to protect Europe from BSE. The collapse in confidence in British beef could not be allowed to devastate the entire European beef industry.

As the ban has come into effect the Commission has made clear it is ready to help pay compensation, but only when Britain comes to "consult" over what eradication plans it proposes. Even this the Government has been reluctant to do.

For the leaders meeting in Turin the paradox of the British position is clear. The go-it-alone policy over beef has brought home just how much Britain needs Europe. Late in the day the Government is now showing readiness to co-operate and to accept that it has no choice but to come to Europe for financial help. A deal is expected to be drafted today.

The broader lessons for European "co-operation" and for the search for a common purpose at the IGC are as yet unclear. The devastating effect of the beef ban on British industry cannot yet be assessed. As the worst effects are felt, it may be that the ban hardens British public opinion even further against European integration.

What Britain's partners hope, however, as they meet Mr Major in Turin, is that the beef crisis will help them emphasise the necessity for Britain to recognise that its interests are inextricably tied to Europe.

Jacques Chirac, the French President, and Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, will today undoubtedly take the opportunity to offer sympathy to Britain over the crisis and speak of the need to respond as a union working, in Mr Major's words, in an "common enterprise".

Concerned: The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, who advises against a partial monetary union Photograph: PA

Clarke calculates the ins and outs of EMU

DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

SINGLE CURRENCY

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke said yesterday that Britain's decision whether or not to join the single European currency would depend on the relationship between the countries taking part and those staying out – the "ins" and the "outs".

"If a group decides to go ahead and form a European monetary union, the key question is: Would going in be more helpful to our economy than staying out? It depends how they intend to proceed and what will be the relation between the ins and the outs," Mr Clarke told a House of Lords committee.

An accord between France and Germany earlier this week, requiring the outs to join a new exchange rate mechanism with the single currency, sparked new tensions between the likely core members of the single currency and other countries, including Britain, on the eve of the Inter-Governmental Conference in Turin. Mr Clarke yesterday stressed the importance of avoiding conflict.

"It cannot be in anyone's interest in the European Union for friction between the ins and outs to start to develop," he said. He added that it was high time the EU addressed the question of this relationship.

The British Government is thoroughly opposed to a new exchange rate mechanism. Mr Clarke rejected the argument made by the French in particular, that countries outside the single currency would try to benefit from competitive devaluations against the euro.

"There are Frenchmen who believe the British cunningly contrived Black Wednesday [when the pound dropped out of the existing Exchange Rate Mechanism]", he said. But he argued that there was no competitive advantage in debasing the currency.

The Chancellor told the committee that he was very concerned about the risk that a partial monetary union would be divisive. "It would create enormous strains within the European Union if a hard core took all the decisions," he said.

He also expressed concern that the European Central Bank would take decisions without reference to the interests of countries outside the Euro currency bloc, although EU finance ministers have started to address this issue, he said.

Mr Clarke added that he himself was sympathetic to the idea of a single currency, but it was a "complete myth" that he was determined to join come what may. He could see himself arguing either way depending on the circumstances.

international

Old bruiser set to give Yeltsin a bloody nose

As the fledgling 'Third Force' group gathers strength, alarm bells ring in the Kremlin. **Phil Reeves** reports

Moscow — Anyone who asks General Alexander Lebed about the injuries he received during his boxing career is likely to be treated to one of the more disturbing stunts to be performed by a public figure.

He places his thumb on his nose and presses hard. As its bone structure was smashed in a fight, it crumples, making his battered profile entirely flat but for a ridge of bushy eyebrows. The general proudly shows off this trick as proof that he was a serious combatant, willing to get hurt in order to triumph. "What kind of fighter is it that doesn't get injured?" he asked, with the same unnerving glare that Mike Tyson uses to mesmerise his prey.

He does not need to spell out his larger meaning, which is that he wants Russians to believe that he brings the same qualities – courage and purposefulness – to the political arena.

Four months ago, the reserve general was one of the most widely discussed figures in Russian politics. Almost everyone expected his party, the Congress of Russian Communities, to do well in December's parliamentary elections; pundits predicted that he would be a strong candidate in the presidential elections this June. But, the party crashed, winning less than 5 per cent of the vote.

It became clear the party was damaged by a personality feud between General Lebed and its co-leader, Yuri Skokov. Overnight, the general lost his pin-up boy status, and it looked as if Russians would no longer be treated to endless television interviews in which they marvelled as much at his astonishingly low voice as his politics.

Until now. With only a few weeks to go before the first round of the presidential poll, General Lebed is preparing to enter the ring again. He has declared his candidacy, and has revealed he is likely to be part of a new group called "Third Force", a coalition aimed at sweeping up the anti-Yeltsin, anti-Communist vote.

Although the group is in embryonic form, its leaders are also expected to include Svyatoslav Fyodorov, a veteran politician whose skills as an eye-surgeon made him a national celebrity. Significantly, there is also talk that it has recruited the liberal economist, Grigory Yavlinsky, whose Yabloko party came fourth last December, but who has been slipping in the polls.

The group's plans will be under close scrutiny in the Kremlin, where potential vote-stealers are regarded with alarm. Opinion surveys show President Yeltsin's popularity rising; a *Moscow Times* / CNN poll had him in second place with 14 per cent, behind the Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov's 19.1 per cent.

If the trend continues, the President should make it into a run-off, giving him a good chance of retaining power. But there remains a chance that the anti-communist vote could be split between Mr Yeltsin and another party, threatening his chances of making it to the second round.

This is not a prospect which appears to disturb General Lebed, who claims to be after the middle-of-the road – neither "red nor white" – electorate. "There are lots of people who wouldn't support either the left or the right," he told the *Independent*. "They are not radicals, but believe in common sense . . . They are the Third Force."

He said he had "no fears" of a split vote, arguing that the parliamentary election demonstrated that the left wing has about 25 per cent of the vote, while the right has about 15 per cent. "Some 60 per cent of the votes lie in between. I'm working for them."

Third Force's political agenda is likely to be based on broad themes such as improved living standards, not least because its leaders' ideologies differ. General Lebed, for example, is a moderate nationalist, with a scattering of hard-line tendencies, including a refusal (mindful of the prejudices of the public) to condemn Stalin.

Dr Fyodorov is an exponent of "people's capitalism" – an economy based on joint-stock companies in which all employees own shares and have equal voting rights, plus widespread private land ownership. The 3,500 employees at his eye institute in Moscow are paid a share of the profits rather than a salary, an incentive scheme that has amassed enough wealth for the institute to allow it to buy a big dacha-dotted stretch of the Moscow River, complete with restaurants, a yacht club and a stable of Arabian horses.

Once launched, the group would have a long road to travel, and little time. But all three men enjoy enough popularity in Russia to arouse attention in political circles; and together have the support of about 10 per cent of those surveyed by the *Moscow Times* and CNN. The general says that they would ultimately field only one candidate – the one who leads the polls.

Any party that assembles three such veterans under one banner is worth watching – on the off-chance that the general, with his men, will give Mr Yeltsin a nose as damaged as his own.

Ear to the ground: General Alexander Lebed, party leader of the Congress of Russian Communities, at a press conference in Moscow Photograph: Finck Jockel/AP

Presidential aide returns to fold

Moscow — Anatoly Chubais, the market reformer whom Boris Yeltsin dropped from his cabinet earlier this year, yesterday said he had put emotions aside and joined the team working for the President's re-election because it was the only realistic way of saving Russia from a return to Communism, *writes Helen Womack*.

The revamped Communists, under Gennady Zyuganov, had on economic specialists and the chances of them turning out to be moderate after June's poll were slim. Rather, they were likely to nationalise and even confiscate property. "The price of this [a Communist] victory will be terrible," he said.

Mr Chubais's decision to involve himself in the campaign will boost Mr Yeltsin, whose ratings have been rising. Mr Zyuganov remains the front-runner but some Russians have been put off by a Communist-inspired vote in the State Duma denouncing the dismantling of the Soviet Union. They have taken this to mean the true colours of the Communists are not pink but dark red.

***Mr Chubais, who was First* Deputy Prime Minister until January, was blamed by Mr Yeltsin for the poor showing of the government party, Our Home is Russia, in December's parliamentary elections, won by the Communists.**

Yesterday he said he would remain outside the government, even if Mr Yeltsin won, and from an independent position would tell the Kremlin leader unpalatable truths.

Tourists get a real feeling for dinosaurs

DAVID USBORNE
New York

We may still be a long way from realising the *Jurassic Park* fantasy of regenerating dinosaurs, but, thanks to a new fossil discovery in the south-western US, we can at least imagine we are touching one.

Proclaiming itself the world's first "dinosaur-petting zoo", a New Mexico museum is inviting visitors to stroke the armour of a creature that roamed the American plains and deserts 70 million years ago.

What they are touching is a silicone cast taken from a section of fossilised skin of a duck-billed dinosaur discovered in the nearby ranges. The sensation is something close to feeling the ridged tyres of a mountain bike, with a pattern of crimped, raised bumps.

"People who come here can put their hands on the exhibit and essentially pet the dinosaur," Spencer Lucas, a palaeontologist at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, in Albuquerque, said yesterday. "I think children will remember this more than reading about dinosaurs in books."

The original fossil was uncovered five years ago by a geology student, but it was only last year that scientists realised what it represented. "It's so weird that, as a trained palaeontologist, I didn't know what the hell it was," Mr Lucas said.

The fossil is about 10 foot long and 2 foot across and only a small section has been excavated for the museum's exhibit. Although about a dozen duck-billed dinosaur skin impressions have already been found around the world, Mr Lucas says this one is important because most of it is intact and in the ground.

"Only by studying it in the ground and in its proper context are we going to be able to figure out how the skin got to be preserved," he said.

The bones of the animal are also fossilised and are in place under the skin, although there is no sign of any muscle or other tissues.

The chance to "pet" the dinosaur comes only weeks after scientists in New Mexico unveiled separate plans to re-create the sounds that dinosaurs made by blowing air through the trombone-like cavities of a fossil of a duck-billed dinosaur's skull. They expect to hear a deeply resonating "moo".

What is likely to interest scientists most about the skin fossil is how tough the lizard was, suggesting it evolved to combat carnivorous insects.

Mike Brett-Surman, a dinosaur specialist at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, noted: "It brings to mind the picture of a Mesozoic mosquito with a Black and Decker drill."

Well-preserved: Mr Lucas with some of the fossilised skin. Visitors can 'pet' a cast of it Photograph: AP

Polish ex-leader faces trial over killings in 1970

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

A Polish court opened proceedings yesterday against the country's last Communist leader, Wojciech Jaruzelski, who has been indicted over the killing of at least 44 people during workers' protests in December 1970.

Mr Jaruzelski, 72, a retired general, was Poland's defence minister when the then Communist authorities ordered the army and police to shoot at civilians who were demonstrating against food price rises in Gdansk and other Baltic ports.

The Gdansk provincial court, granting Mr Jaruzelski's defence lawyers a request for more time to study the case, decided to reconvene in three months. The court also agreed to consider Mr Jaruzelski's request that the trial be turned over to Poland's State Tribunal, a body that handles cases involving senior government officials.

The former president and Communist Party leader is best remembered abroad for his declaration of martial law in December 1981, to suppress Solidarity, the mass movement whose leaders eventually restored democracy in Poland in 1989 – paradoxically, with Mr Jaruzelski's co-operation.

A Polish parliamentary committee, possibly influenced by his own view that he acted to prevent a Soviet invasion, recommended last month that Mr Jaruzelski should not stand trial for imposing martial law.

For many Poles, the 1970 killings are as terrible a memory as the declaration of martial law. The Communist authorities initially tried to conceal the truth, partly by arranging secret, night-time burials of the dead workers.

But the events prepared the ground for the emergence of Solidarity in 1980 as the first free trade union in Communist Eastern Europe. Lech Walesa, the former Solidarity leader and first post-Communist president of Poland, used to say the 1970 killings on the Baltic coast were the decisive moment leading to his transformation from a humble shipyard electrician in Gdansk into a world-famous opposition leader.

Several dozen Solidarity supporters stood in front of the court yesterday, holding up banners reading "Communist crimes – genocide crimes" and demanding punishment for Mr Jaruzelski and 11 officials accused of instigating the shootings. "Revenge is not the purpose of this trial. It should restore trust in the justice system," Solidarity's leader in Gdansk, Jacek Rybicki, told the newspaper *Zycie Warszawy*.

Among those accused with Mr Jaruzelski are a former interior minister, a former deputy prime minister and nine former army and security police officers. Poland's reformed Communists, who were returned to power in free elections in 1993, reject opposition charges that they have sought to delay the case going to trial.

Polish lawyers say the trial could be the biggest in the nation's history, with 1,000 witnesses likely to be summoned.

An appeal court last week set aside the acquittal of two generals held responsible for the murder in 1984 of the popular pro-Solidarity priest, Father Jerzy Popieluszko.

Daughter and mother: Chelsea and Hillary Clinton at Istanbul's Blue Mosque yesterday. They also took in St Sophia Museum Photograph: AP

Balkans' favourite granny sees it all

PEOPLE

Consulting with oracles on the part of military and political leaders has a long and honourable history. In fact it is only in recent centuries that the practice has fallen from fashion. No doubt the modern obsession with scientific method has something to do with the change, but science has brought not one jot of foresight and predictability into the political sphere. Leaders are constantly and universally surprised by the twists and turns of history. Chamberlain was taken by surprise, Hitler was taken by surprise. Churchill was taken by surprise. More recently the various already forgotten Communist leaders in Eastern Europe were taken by surprise. And more recently still Margaret Thatcher, George Bush ... from their positions of maximum access to all available information, they got it wrong and paid the price. Bill Clinton is a certain winner in November, of course – which suddenly makes Bob Dole look rather a good bet.

All the more reason then to take Granny Vanga seriously. Granny lives in a remote mountain village in southern Bulgaria, near the border with Greece.

She is 85 years old and blind. But she can see clearly, into the future. And she is the most revered Bulgarian alive.

Compared with her, Hristo Stoichkov, sadly unable to show off his own magic at Wembley on Wednesday, is a nobody.

Her pronouncements are always faithfully reported by Bulgaria's media and provide a much-needed source of comfort as the country makes its painful transition from Communism to democracy and a market-based economy.

Top politicians regularly travel from all over the Balkans and from Russia to seek her advice.

Her fellow octogenarian and former dictator Todor Zhivkov still keeps in touch and sent her gifts on her recent name-day, also the Orthodox Christian feast of the Annunciation.

And what was the substance of her pronouncement on this occasion? "Things will be difficult until May but thereafter they will improve," she foretold. There are familiar resonances here. Difficult to place at first, then quite unmistakable. This is our very own Kenneth Clarke.

The Chancellor has not been in southern Bulgaria recently, so far as I recall. But then, Granny Vanga does have a telephone.

I am told by people who have been there that not much happens in Bulgaria, which no doubt makes prophesying a little easier than it might otherwise be. You can get away with the broader view and not get tripped up by the detail. This may also explain why Switzerland can seem an exciting place to live and ... yes ... fall in love. In 1991 President Zhelyu Zhelev appointed one Elena Kircheva as Sofia's ambassador in Berne. Unfortunately she seems to have met with bad company and, as those from the more genteel backgrounds may in such circumstances, succumbed. The company she succumbed to in the country where the cows might have a touch of the folie Anglaise but the people are as sane as cowbells, is Petar Hadzhidimitrov. Petar is obviously a touch schizophrenic. He is an admirer of Adolf Hitler but at the same time denies that the culmination of his hero's life's work, the Holocaust, ever took place. He has only lived in Switzerland since 1974, so perhaps a cure is in the offing. But his homeland – Bulgaria, again, – is not doing much to help. Unlike many East European countries, Bulgaria prides itself on lacking an anti-Semitic tradition. During the Second World War it refused to hand over its Jews to the Nazis, despite being a German ally. So it is deeply embarrassed by the marriage of its ambassador. President Zhelev has set in motion the procedure for removing Mrs Hadzhidimitrov from her post.

Zhivkov: Often consults fortune-telling granny

We suggested last week that Lech Walesa might be carrying a grudge against the Queen for not recognising him as a brother monarch. The substance of their private conversation this week has not been revealed, but he has now turned his ire against his own country's treatment of him. Polish law provides an ex-president with a bodyguard, a car and health care at a government clinic – but no pension. So the former £100-a-month electrician has now sent a fax to the management of his old shipyard in Gdansk asking for his old job back.

James Roberts

international

Police cave in to Inkatha show of force

ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

The first group of the 10,000 Zulus to hit the streets of Johannesburg yesterday in a controversial demonstration seemed to materialise out of thin air. The Jeppestown district was deserted most of the morning, but for a few dozen soldiers and police agents who cradled shotguns against their flak jackets at some road blocks.

Then 400 Zulu warriors waving knobkerries, metal pipes, sticks and spears turned a corner. Where there was silence a moment before, an entire neighbourhood was abruptly heaving with rhythmic chanting and the clacking of truncheons against cattle-hide shields.

The police stared at a wall of Zulu demonstrators in a variety of costumes, ranging from leopard-skin loincloths to pink dresses. The Zulu impi, or regiment, waved its traditional weapons in a taunting manner at the police and in clear defiance of the law.

The police vowed only hours before to uphold the week-old Dangerous Weapons Act. But in such circumstances, even with their shotguns, any attempt to disarm the crowd would have been foolhardy. Instead, the police talked into their two-way radios and gave way before the prancing warriors and ululating women.

It was one of the few tense moments in a day of protest which passed with surprisingly few incidents. The demonstration was called to commemorate the shooting to death of eight Inkatha supporters outside the Shell House building, the headquarters of President Nelson Mandela's ANC, two years ago, on 28 March. It became known as the Shell House massacre and is still a source of friction between the ANC and Inkatha.

Tension was high before the demonstration as both the ANC and its Inkatha rivals traded accusations of plots to provoke a similar incident.

But in the end, as is often the case in South Africa these days, it was the law which had to yield. One police officer assured me that "particularly dangerous" weapons, such as spears and axes, had been confiscated.

In the next breath he admitted it had been done in very few cases and only when the police were dealing with small, "manageable" groups of Zulus.

A strong show of force by the police and the army, who cordoned off parts of the city centre with razor wire, as well as the police's pragmatic approach to enforcing the law, were credited for allowing the demonstration to pass without trouble.

But the police's failure to make good its threat has left the government looking weak, and has reinforced an impression that people in South Africa may flout the laws they dislike.

The Dangerous Weapons Act, passed last week at the urging of Mr Mandela and his Safety and Security Minister, Sydney Mufamadi, was aimed at reducing the political violence between ANC and Inkatha in KwaZulu-Natal.

The fear is that, as yesterday showed, the new law is unenforceable. A similar weapons ban was instituted by the last white minority government of FW de Klerk at the behest of the recently unbanned ANC. Then the police were also faced with huge rallies, where it was impossible to disarm people without inviting mass slaughter.

Unless the government makes progress on investigating the Shell House massacre, next year's demonstration may not be so passive.

Shin Bet under fire over murder of Rabin

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

Yitzhak Rabin's bodyguards believed the Israeli radical right was more likely to throw stones and tomatoes than to try to murder the prime minister, according to the official report on the assassination, which was published yesterday.

The three-man commission, headed by Meir Shamgar, a former president of the Supreme Court and which spent four months investigating security lapses which allowed Yigal Amir to kill Rabin so easily, decided there was no evidence of a conspiracy. Although Karmi Gillon, then head of the Shin Bet (GSS) security service, knew the danger of Rabin being attacked by a member of the far right was increasing, he did nothing to impress this on his subordinates or the prime minister's bodyguards.

Rabin: Video showed how easy it was for his killer

The commission had a narrow brief in investigating the immediate security breakdown on 4 November, when Rabin was shot three times in the back as he left a "Yes to Peace, No to Violence" rally in Tel Aviv. Israelis were astonished last year to see on an amateur video that Amir was able to dawdle for 40 minutes as he waited for his victim without anybody asking what he was doing. There were only two bodyguards with Rabin as he was shot, neither standing directly behind him.

The report said: "The Shin Bet had abundant information about the intensification of threats against the lives of prominent persons, first and foremost the Prime Minister. The Shin Bet did not do enough, in terms of adjusting its protection method to the new risks, to cope with the worsening threat, and did not ensure that its bodyguards properly understood the severity of this threat."

The commission rejected the thesis that the need for politicians to have direct contact with the public made the task of protecting Rabin impossible. It said the failings were organisational: it mentioned a number of times the unwillingness of all the security services to direct efforts towards detecting and stopping a Jewish assassin.

The commission was not mandated to deal with the build-up of violent opposition to Rabin's policy of partial withdrawal from the West Bank. Its definition of a conspiracy to assassinate was narrowly defined.

There was no doubt Amir belonged to a circle of militant religious nationalists prepared to use violence to oppose the Oslo Accords. Some members of the group knew of his intentions to kill Rabin. Shlomi Halevy, a student, had told police, though in a convoluted form, of Amir's intention to commit murder, claiming he had overheard it in a lavatory in a Tel Aviv bus station. In reality, he had been told by his girlfriend.

The commission's 214-page report has a 118-page classified annexe. Judge Shamgar is very much an establishment figure and the conclusions of the report are for the most part bland.

Mr Gillon stepped down as head of the Shin Bet in January, though he said yesterday that he offered his resignation three days after the assassination. The head of VIP protection has also resigned. Other Shin Bet officials responsible for protecting Rabin were censured in the report.

Rabin's assassination has resulted in much tighter security for senior officials, including his successor, Shimon Peres, and his Cabinet ministers.

Ministers now say that their guards keep them away from the public at a time when they want to mingle with the crowds in the run-up to the election on 29 May.

Exercising restraint: An Israeli soldier releasing a handcuffed Palestinian after yesterday's swoop on the university town of Bir Zeit. Photograph: AP

Hundreds held in crackdown on Palestinian students

Jerusalem — Israeli forces yesterday arrested 200 students at Bir Zeit university. 10 per cent of the student body of the most prestigious Palestinian educational institution in the occupied territories, writes Patrick Cockburn.

The arrests started at 4am yesterday when large contingents of Israeli security forces moved into the hill-top town of Bir Zeit, north of Jerusalem, and two nearby villages. Loudspeakers announced that the town was under curfew as teams of soldiers entered student houses and apartment buildings. Students and others detained were held in a playing field in the nearby village of Jifna.

Israeli radio said that 370 Palestinians had been detained. The army said that the aim was to arrest suspected guerrillas, confiscate weapons and "round up and return home Palestinians who were staying in these areas illegally". This refers to students from Gaza attending Bir Zeit, though the university says only half the students detained come from there.

The mass round-up will further alienate Palestinians on the West Bank who feel that the limited gains they made through the Oslo accords are being steadily eroded. In addition to the clamp-down by Israel, the Palestinian Authority has arrested at least 700 suspected members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad according to Amnesty International.

In the wake of the four suicide bombings which killed 62 people in Israel, Israeli security forces have moved back into the 465 villages from which they had largely departed.

The blowing up of the houses of the families of those alleged to be involved in suicide bombing and other high profile gestures appear to be aimed at impressing the Israeli electorate with the government's tough stance on security in the lead up to the election on 29 May.

Priests and a judge in child-sex scandal

ELIZABETH NASH
Madrid

Three priests, a marquis, a university professor, a policeman, a juvenile court judge and a retired flamenco dancer. This collection, together with 50 other people, have one thing in common: embroilment in a scandal involving a homosexual child prostitution ring in the southern Spanish city of Seville. Two men, a comedian and a singer, were bailed for 2m pesetas (£10,000) this week on suspicion of corrupting minors in the case.

After months of investigating the goings on at the Arny gay bar, in Seville, Judge Maria Auxiliadora Echavarri recently lifted the ban on reporting that she had formerly imposed.

But she withheld the names of the witnesses, more than 20 boys some as young as 14, for their protection. They are identified only by number.

The scandal emerged when a young victim who did not receive promised payment tipped off the authorities more than a year ago that under-age boys were subjected to sexual abuse by prosperous dignitaries who frequented the Arny bar. One of the witnesses – known by the pseudonym "Eduardo" – said in a radio interview in January that he had been offered clothes, money, drinks, travel and cocaine in exchange for sexual favours.

The decision to conceal the identity of the accusers was denounced by defence lawyers as recalling the worst traditions of the Inquisition.

They learnt details of the accusations only by wading through 16 fat volumes of anonymous testimony, a labour that the Justice Ministry eased somewhat at the weekend by renting for them an industrial photocopier.

The chief evidence against the singer Javier Gurruchaga was his apparent request by telephone from a Seville hotel to the Arny for a "*moito*" (an Arab boy) to be sent to him. The police had tapped his call. Others, including the comedian Jorge Cadaval, are implicated on the evidence of young victims and in some cases photographs taken in the Arny by policemen posing as potential clients.

Judge Manuel Rico Lara, who presided over Seville's juvenile court, was suspended from his functions and bailed for 1m pesetas in January after one boy testified to having had a sexual relationship with him. The judge declared his innocence and claimed he had been a victim of mistaken identity.

The Arny was closed last October and its owner, Carlos Saldana, jailed on charges of promoting under-age prostitution. One of the establishment's highlights was Friday-night bingo with a naked boy in a private cubicle as the top prize. The youths were mostly Spaniards but included some from elsewhere in Europe and Morocco.

IN BRIEF

China to bar Patten from handover

Hong Kong — China is bent on preventing Governor Chris Patten from participating in the joint ceremony for Hong Kong's transfer to China next year, according to diplomatic sources. Britain's chief negotiator on the handover, Hugh Davies, reported "difficulties" yesterday after the latest round of talks in the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group. *Reuter*

Village siege ends

Leienkaul — Commandos overpowered one of Germany's most notorious criminals and freed seven members of his former wife's family that he had threatened to kill during a gruelling 24-hour ordeal in a rural village. Prosecutors identified the man as Norbert Hagner, 45, who spent 11 years in jail for a series of spectacular bank robberies and kidnappings in the 1970s and early 1980s. *Reuter*

Okinawa base row

Tokyo — The Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, signed documents to force reluctant property owners on Okinawa to renew leases for US military bases after the local governor refused to do so. Throughout the day, a construction crew buried to complete a security fence around a US military communications unit where police expect protests against the forced renewal. *AP*

Hunt for monks

Paris — Algerian security forces searching for seven French Trappist monks sealed off the Islamist stronghold of Medea from where they were abducted 24 hours earlier by suspected Muslim militants. "We are waiting anxiously for some news of them but unfortunately we have heard nothing so far," said a spokesman for the Algiers diocese. *Reuter*

Hostage seen alive

Tatraw, Cambodia — A British land mine removal expert and his Cambodian interpreter, held hostage by an armed gang, have been seen alive at a camp belonging to Khmer Rouge guerrillas. They were seen by messengers sent by the government to help negotiate the release of Christopher Howes and his colleague in the British-based Mines Advisory Group, who were detained Tuesday. *AP*

Bangladesh sit-in

Dhaka — President Abdur Rahman Biswas agreed to a law that all future elections in Bangladesh be overseen by non-party caretaker governments. But thousands of angry civil servants, defying a police ban and demanding that the caretaker regime take charge now, continued their sit-in at the secretariat, the hub of civil administration. *Reuter*

Farewell in space

Cape Canaveral — Stormy weather moving into Florida forced Nasa to call the shuttle Atlantis to land tomorrow, a day early. The decision was announced a few hours after the crews of the shuttle and the Russian space station Mir said goodbye in a brief but emotional ceremony. *Reuter*

'Godfather' dies

Tokyo — Shin Kanemaru, who wielded immense power as Japan's political godfather for four decades until he was ousted by a huge corruption scandal, died yesterday of a stroke at the age of 81. *AP*

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news analysis

Town *vs* Country

A rampant urban moralism has been unleashed upon the countryside. Those working the land see townies lost in a haze of hypocrisy and ignorance. The BSE scare springs from the estranged relationship of modern farmers and consumers

The wet-eyed young farmer who told a television crew there would soon be more people dead by suicide on farms than dead by Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease was repeating a warning that is being echoed across the countryside. Mad cow disease is not only a health question, nor simply a politics question. It is a question of town and country. It has provoked the biggest crisis for generations in relations between farming, or country people, and the cities where most of us live. And this has been a long time brewing.

In the city, for the consumer, there are always options. In the country, for struggling medium-sized farmers, there aren't. There, the force of urban consumer choice, far beyond the power of politicians, will wipe out rural businesses, hopes, companies – and yes, probably some lives, too. Once this plague has passed, a whole culture of agricultural know-how will have passed away. And what must hurt more than anything is that the disappearance of those farmers will cause barely a ripple of disquiet among the ruminant urbanites.

ANDREW MARR

Farmers must listen to lectures from 'animal lovers' who have never sat up all night with a sick calf

There has been a terrible reversal in farmers' reputations. Not so long ago, they were respected national heroes, whose sweat and knowledge helped the country survive war and eat ever better in peacetime. Townies might not know much about farming, but they knew farmers mattered. Only a few generations ago, most factory workers, clerks and professional people would have had some dim memory that their people had come from some working village, shire or farm. In millions of Victorian and early 20th-century workers' homes, prints of farmyards and cottages kept the memory of a rural past alive.

Quite recently, there has been a dramatic change in attitude. A rampant urban moralism has increasingly painted farmers as big-business villains – cruel, greedy, insensitive, polluting. When protesters against the live export of lambs or veal calves blockade Shoreham, urban morality speaks. When hunt saboteurs pack into minivans and head for the shires, urban morality is outraged. When suspicious consumers challenge store managers about pesticides in fruit, when suburban ramblers find old hedges have been grubbed up, or twitchers fail to hear expected birdsong – then, and in scores of other examples, urban Britain stares bleakly at rural Britain, and finds it wanting.

From the other end of the telescope, the minority still working the land stares back at the cities and suburbs and see a haze of hypocrisy and ignorance. They see consumers wanting cheap, interesting and varied food, without being ready to spend much time or money on it. Yet the majority who prefers life that way descends into moral spasm whenever they glimpse the consequences of their impossible demands. Then thinking farmers hear lectures from "animal lovers" who have never sat up at night with a sick calf. Now they must listen to a great roar of approval for the destruction of their livelihoods.

We have been walking towards this disaster for a long time. As the first industrial country, Britain has been losing any connection with growing food for hundreds of years. From the 18th century onwards there occurred one of the great changes in mankind's history. It was simply but well described by the historian Harold Perkin as "a revolution in human productivity, in the capacity of men to wring a living from nature ... " This, Perkin said, "enabled a minority of a much larger population to grow the food for all the rest, releasing the majority for other kinds of work, including modern industry, mechanised transport, large-scale government, mass warfare and the professions. It created the modern city ... "

Our contemporary world, with its liberating technologies, its huge human population, its myriad consumer choice, its cyberspace and post-modern irony, rests on something most of us no longer think about. The countryside is a place few people live in and fewer understand. The pressure on agriculture to make less earth produce more food becomes ever more relentless.

There is nothing new about urban squeamishness and willing ignorance when it comes to food. Vegetarianism and a concern for animal welfare have been well-recorded, if minority interests, for hundreds of years. In the early 1700s the Duke of Montagu, who loved lambs but said that "when by chance he saw 'em killing one, he turned his head away and could not bear to look," is the hypocritical ancestor of modern man.

This disconnection between beast and plate, field and food, has grown more dangerous with the rise of factory processing and industrial techniques. Anonymous, highly flavoured, brightly packaged gunk – sweetened breakfast gunk, crispy-dyed snack gunk, breaded microwave TV gunk, even gourmet gunk – is producing an extraordinarily ignorant generation. A survey for the Countryside Campaign, launched last November, discovered that one in five children aged seven to 10 believed eggs were laid by pigs and bacon came from chicken. A third didn't know that oats, barley and peas were grown in Britain. One in 10 thought there were lions, tigers and kangaroos at large in the British countryside.

Urban adults are, no doubt, less ignorant. We are pretty gullible, even so. We are stupid enough to think that brown-shelled eggs are more "natural"; and when egg producers put colouring in chicken food to ensure that we get brown-shelled eggs very few of us stop and ask what suddenly happened to all the white-shelled eggs.

The rural dream: industrial workers kept alive the memories of their past with idealised prints Hulton Deutsch

We think, or pretend to think, that cows live in fields and that "free-range" chickens spend their lives pecking at corn in cobbled farmyards, rather than in factory-style sheds. And so on. This thoughtlessness about how food happens can lead politicians, like the rest of us, into hilarious inanity, as when Teresa Gorman reminded the Commons, in tremulous tones, that the salmonella scare had caused the death of a million chickens. What, I wonder, did she think was meant to happen to them? That they were going to end their days in Bournemouth retirement homes watching daytime television?

Squeamish ignorance about food is dangerous partly because it leads to events like the current beef and brain disease affair. We swing from long periods of complacency to explosions of hysteria. But it is directly dangerous, too. Had consumers and the media been more interested in food production and more knowledgeable, would farmers have experimented with feeding cows on the mashed remains of sheep? Would the Ministry of Agriculture have been so relaxed about the widespread use of organo-phosphates? Would there have been more caution about the effect of plastic packaging on meat?

Farmers must take responsibility for what has happened on their farms. The hysteria they are suffering from is partly the result of the consumer ignorance from which many of them have profited in the past. But the urban consumer cannot turn round and bleat, "no one ever told me" about what happens in abattoirs, food processing plants and egg farms. The information, to be sure, is partly hidden by the bland wall of food company propaganda that splashes words like "natural" alongside images of Tuscan peasants, Swiss pastures and half-timbered English barns. But it is not secret. It takes a moment's thought to make one wonder at the relatively low price and abundance in the supermarket. And after wondering what has been done to achieve this – a fourfold increase in agricultural production since 1945 – it is not hard to come by the truth.

We are free people and with freedom comes the duty to be informed and to think. Our ignorance of our countryside is, for the most part, willing. We are ready to think of it via vague, reassuring images, from Postman Pat to Constable, as a place of tranquillity and unchanging values rather than as a heavily mechanised terrain whose inhabitants worry about market share, unemployment and return on capital.

Wendell Berry, the American farmer and writer, has reflected that what he calls the "industrial eater" has lost sense of the culture and origins of food, and that this is highly convenient for the food industry: "The products of nature and agriculture have been made, to all appearances, the products of industry. Both eater and eaten are in exile from biological reality ... It would not do for the consumer to know that the hamburger she is eating came from a steer who spent much of his life standing deep in his own excrement in a feedlot, helping to pollute the local streams."

Well, we know now. And we also know that what seems convenient for the food industry may turn out, to be disastrous not just for some passive consumers, but for the farmer, the farm-worker, the abattoir owner, the local haulier, the cheesemaker and the village shop – in short, for the countryside itself.

There are political answers: an assault on the Common Agricultural Policy, which encourages intensive volume farming at the expense of smaller-scale farms; positive encouragement for organic farming; perhaps a labelling and grading system designed to promote high-quality British food.

But the real power for reform lies with us, the consumers, not only free but hugely powerful and in historical terms, wealthy too. Modern prosperity is encouraging a demand for locally butchered meat, organic vegetables and speciality cheeses. It may be objected that this is an élite, middle-class development, but many reforms in taste and culture start there. We have enough quantity, indeed, too much quantity. We need quality instead. We need to become a country that grows less, better. This is a lesson that applies to more about modern Britain than its agriculture. But our agricultural economy, which has come close to disaster in recent days, is where the quality revolution must start.

DIARY

Beef, belief and kangaroo nibbles

In all the secular coverage of the BSE scare, it has been left to the humble *Baptist Times* to come up with a spiritual angle. Under a bold headline, "Beef and Belief", its editorial ponders the problem with proper Christian modesty. "There is little that a newspaper such as ours can add to the debate," it begins. Undaunted, it goes on and asks: "Is there a distinctively Christian contribution which can be made?"

There is indeed. "Abstaining from beef is one way Christians might wish to consider the traditional pre-Easter Lenten period of abstinence." Just tell all the angry farmers that you're very sorry, but you can't be blamed – religion strictly forbids that beefburger.

Just one minor drawback, though. Aren't you meant to give up something you'd actually like to eat?

And what to eat instead? There I can be of some assistance. The answer came at a reception at Australia House for costumes from the Australian ballet this week. Guests were nervily fingering the nibbles. Is it beef, they whispered? No, replied the cultural attaché, proudly. It's kangaroo. It was. And we all forgot childhoods curled up with AA Milne and munched merrily.

'Our Tune' fades out

An era ends. An era of toe-curling, cringe-making gunge perhaps. But an era nevertheless. Simon Bates's "Our Tune", the mid-morning, how-we-met memory which moved from Radio 1 to Talk Radio. Sadly for toe-curlers, yesterday Bates and Talk Radio parted company, with a spokeswoman being none too diplomatic about "Our Tune" or its creator. She claimed it prompted 8 per cent of people to reach for the off button. "The public hated it," she said. "We had people ringing to complain every time we played a record, saying 'You are supposed to be a talk station'." Bates's cosy style and half-hour interviews were not what was needed, she added.

Material there surely for one final "Our Tune". One can imagine the scene at the Talk Radio studios. Simon and spokeswoman glance at each other slyly; a furtive smile plays across spokeswoman's tips. Simon quivers and his spectacles mist up. "You're a turn-off," she whispers seductively in his ear. And so especially for you, Simon, from central London, The Beatles and "Hello Goodbye".

Your share of protest

Tony Blair will be pleased to see his vision of the stakeholder society has been seized on by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. The organisation is urging its supporters to attend the annual meeting of British Aerospace on 1 May to protest against its sale of Hawk Fighter planes to Indonesia. To encourage a good turnout, the campaign is advertising free BAe shares in its latest newsletter.

Vive la pay-off

They say these things better in France. Christine Ockrent (right), the most important woman in the French media, resigned this week as director and editor-in-chief of *L'Express*, France's highest circulation weekly magazine, following *les differences* with the magazine's new owners. Ms Ockrent, who runs her own production company and hosts a political TV show, said in her farewell letter to staff that she was leaving "with head held high and a generous heart".

It was a fine French flourish. How many media moguls over here even possess generous hearts, let alone publicise them?

Mind you, Ms Ockrent can afford to have a generous heart. According to colleagues, she left *L'Express* with a pay-off which, like her head, was high.

Could Babe pig out with a Flufta?

It has not been a good week for Babe, Australia's unlikely screen star. First, pork sales began to soar alarmingly, as the British abandoned beef and turned to bacon. Then came crushing defeat at the Oscars. Emma Thompson may have been quaffing champagne, but Babe was left with pigswill (although his special effects team won Oscars, above).

Hope, however, is at hand. Lloyds Bank, sponsor of the forthcoming Baftas, has come up with a new award: the Flufta, dedicated to the public's favourite acting animal. And, I'm told, Babe is tipped for the title.

Competition for this prestigious accolade is stiff. Free Willy, the Andrex Puppy and Well'Ard, the *EastEnders* dog, are all in the running, and the ceremony will be hosted by Cancara, the Lloyds Bank black horse. In the finest British tradition of sentimental anthropomorphy, my excited source tells me: "Babe will have to keep his trotters crossed a little longer yet."

Any abjections?

A misprint that Leeds West Conservative Association certainly didn't intend in the list of motions for the Conservative Central Council meeting at Harrogate this weekend. The case of the deportation of the Sandi dissident is, it boasts, "an abject lesson" to those who come to Britain to abuse our hospitality. Hard to know how to vote, really.

Mad cow jokes: No 1

I see BSE jokes are beginning to surface.

The first has two cows in a field. One says to the other: "Worrying, all this mad cow disease talk, isn't it?" "Doesn't bother me," comes the reply. "I'm a horse."

Readers who have better and sicker offerings ... my mailbag awaits.

Eagle Eye

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Tories select a loser

The Conservatives are dangerously close to the edge of a gaping hole. It's called a return to the Eleven-plus and it could swallow them. Encouraged by the short-term success they enjoyed exploiting Harriet Harman's decision to send one of her sons to a selective school, they have decided that selection is an issue they can exploit. If they do so, by proposing the widespread reintroduction of selection for secondary schools it will be as political misconceived as it is educationally flawed and socially regressive.

Britain needs reforms which will break down the class ridden nature of its education system, not reinforce those divisions by taking us back to the Fifties.

Education yesterday to provided the reluctant backdrop for another pre-election political skirmish. Gillian Shephard, the Education Secretary, promised a white paper to expand academic selection in grant maintained schools. Earlier her Labour counterpart David Blunkett had launched a a plan for Individual Learning Accounts. Underpinning their statements lie two quite different responses to concerns about the quality of education. Yesterday's announcements will set the pattern for many a clash to come.

The Prime Minister's policy unit appears, to have persuaded Mrs Shephard to go along with its dream of recreating grammar schools. The White Paper will canvas the possibility of allowing schools to select their intake. It would be a grave mistake.

Setting children for subjects is a great improvement on mixed ability teaching. Institutionalising segregation into separate ability schools is a mistake. Borderline children cannot switch easily between ability groups, and less academic children would be quickly stigmatised. Academic segregation goes against the grain of other advance in the government's education policy -- including this week's Dearing report, which tried to encourage a more open and respectful attitude towards vocational skills. Mr Major will find that evoking grammar schools is a political error as well. Schools are not interested. Only one per cent of the grant maintained schools and education bodies consulted on increasing selection responded with any enthusiasm.

Parents know that education is increasingly the best, if not the only, insurance policy against unemployment and insecurity. They also know that expanding selection will only help those with the brightest. Everyone else will be even more worried than before that their children will be written off.

By advocating grammar schools Mr Major is attempting to soothe parental dissatisfaction with atavism. The educational standards and discipline of a mythical golden past are invoked as a solution to the anxieties about change and insecurity in the present. Few will find this convincing. Parents who are concerned about the next generation will be looking for new ideas to help equip them for the future, not old promises about a return to the past.

This is where Messrs Blunkett and Blair step in. Their proposals are aimed at providing remedies for very modern problems. Targeted first at the unskilled their Individual Learning Accounts would incorporate government, individual and employer contributions to help people take control of their careers by acquiring new skills. Of course Labour hasn't found the answer to the skills deficit in Britain, just as they have not yet found a way to combine diversity and choice within the comprehensive system. But they are at least taking the right kind of approach: one that is inclusive but leaves ample room for choice and individual initiative. Those should be the watchwords of a modern education and training policy.

Eastern fantasies

"It was a cock-up, pure and simple." was the Palace spokesman's explanation for the Queen forgetting to mention the fate of Polish Jews in her speech to the Warsaw parliament. The same could be said of the whole of her gaffe-strewn visit to eastern Europe this week.

But then the visit is itself symbolic of the patchy, uncertain and ambiguous character of British engagement with eastern Europe since 1989. Lots of stirring rhetoric, lots of history, some advice, not much action. Margaret Thatcher briefly provided an ideological link with the aspirant monetarist reformers of the region. But that was never going to be enough to sustain a fully-fledged relationship. Yet since her departure Britain's relations in the region seem to have become directionless.

The Queen's trip sits squarely within that amateurish tradition. A gaggle of management consultants making claims about the British formulae for privatisation or (incredibly) how to organise local government are no substitute for investment and trade. Hackneyed references to a sense of guilt about the way our leaders behaved in the Thirties and the Second World War (but no visit to Auschwitz) put Britain firmly in these countries' past not their future.

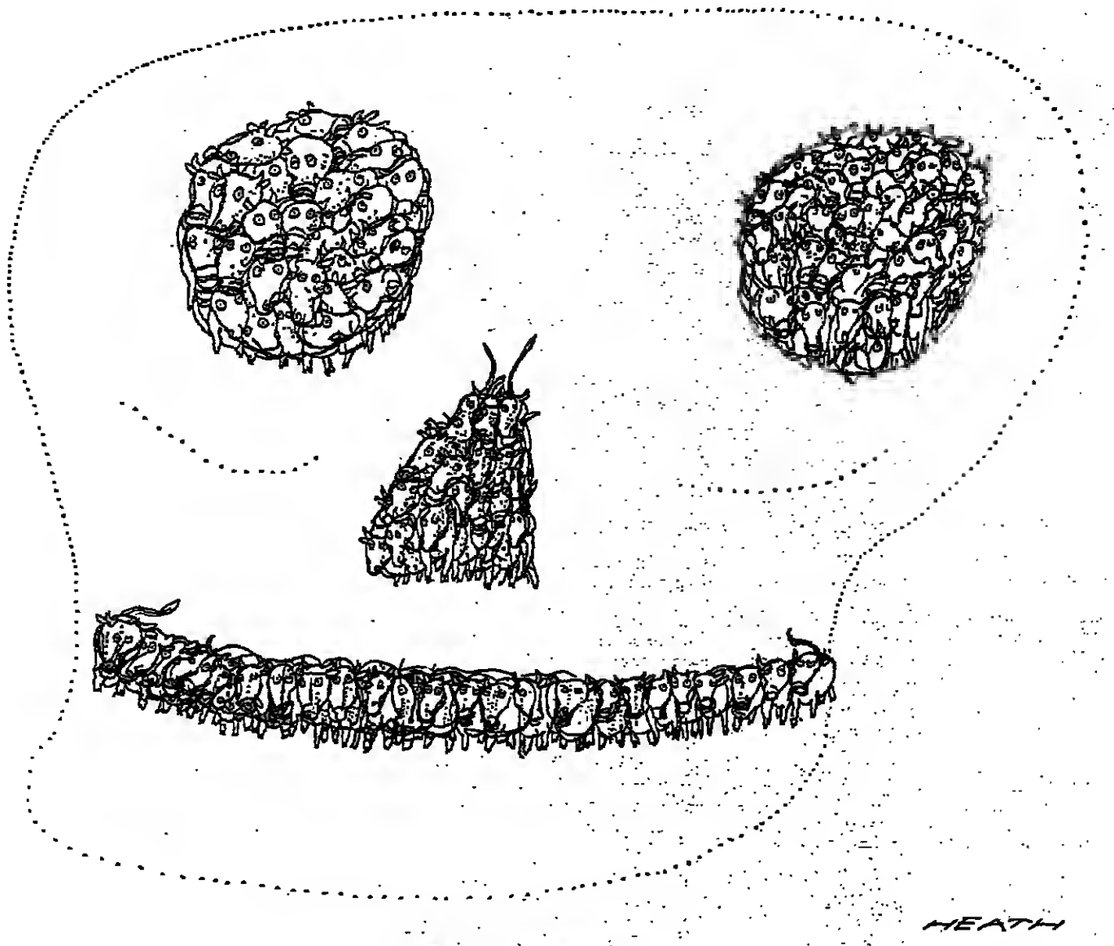
Britain has real interests here. We want Poland and the Czech and Slovak republics and Romania to move west, in terms of outlook, politics and economics. That does not mean premature admission to Nato, or to the European Union. It should mean a consistent engagement with these countries, underpinned by growing trade and investment.

Yet too few British companies, compared with their German counterparts, have explored the opportunities of eastern markets. In the early days after 1989 many investors got their hands burnt by over-optimistic and ill-judged investments. These days it is much easier to judge where and how to invest with confidence in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Britain's political engagement with eastern Europe seems opportunistic. Many Conservatives seems to imagine that eastern European states can be cynically co-opted into a scheme rapidly to widen the European Union with the aim of scuppering federalism once and for all.

It is fantasy. The horse has already bolted. German economic influence in Poland and elsewhere is based on trade, capital flows and joint ventures. The Czechs for one may not like it but their absorption into the Deutschmark zone is a *fait accompli*; eastern Europe's prosperity depends on the Germans.

Of course, as long as the monarchy lasts, the Queen should fly the flag abroad, though one suspects her heart lies in visits across the Commonwealth. But as far as Europe goes, the Queen's visit this week has just served to underline how out-of-touch and unprofessional Britain's approach is. If Britain is to be the standard bearer of a wider EU, it needs to back that with investment and trade rather than royal rituals.



The last round-up

• LETTERS TO THE EDITOR •

Dr Carey's commitment to proclaiming the Gospel

Sir: Andrew Brown's assertion that the Churches' Decade of Evangelism has fizzled out ("Could he be the auntie-pope?", 27 March) is at odds with your coverage of the half-term report on the Decade ("Churches halt exodus", 6 January).

That story pointed to a halt in the decline of attendance: a more user-friendly church, which is planting new congregations every week; whole congregations being involved in evangelism; and more people being trained in new ways of communicating the faith.

It also reported that targets had been identified for the second half of the decade. More needed to be done to reach out to children and young people and more effort had to be placed on deepening the Church's spiritual life.

Far from fizzling out, the Decade of Evangelism is alive and well in parishes throughout the country. In Dr Carey we have an Archbishop of Canterbury who is a courageous leader, warm and approachable, with a deep spiritual commitment to proclaiming the Gospel.

†NIGEL WAKEFIELD
(The Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Wakefield)
Wakefield, West Yorkshire

Sir: Andrew Brown, has made basic mistakes about the spread of Anglicanism and the role of the Archbishop.

Travelling in the bush country of Sudan, thousands of Anglicans lined the way to catch a glimpse of a leader who, for them, represented a global family. Archbishop Carey, much to the delight of Anglicans around the world, represents "us" – the extended, caring interdependent Anglican world.

The role that the Archbishop played in the traumatic situation in Rwanda is quite remarkable. His visit last May to the Episcopal Church in that country of widows and orphans demonstrated that the Anglican family cares about them, their nation and their church. As Anglicans, we join forces with others who show concern for God's world and all of God's people. Archbishop Carey is also a recognised ecumenical leader, and as such works to promote Christian unity. This was evident on his visit to China.

Needless to say, the troops in Bosnia, whether Anglican or not, whether Christian or not, showed appreciation for the Archbishop's presence with them just before Christmas.

As one who has the privilege to work and travel with the Archbishop in Anglican Communion affairs, let me assure you that we have in this Archbishop a person who has a prophetic voice and a compassionate heart.

Canon JOHN I PETERSON
Secretary General
The Anglican Communion
London SE1

Sir: Andrew Brown expects disestablishment of the Church of England to come soon as part of constitutional reform. Only the Liberal Democrats are promising disestablishment. Are they seriously expected to win next time?

PETER BOTTOMLEY MP
(Eltham, Con)
House of Commons
London SW1

Cannibalism, cookery and kuru victims

Sir: Dr Richard Ladle (letter, 26 March) is right to point out similarities between BSE-CJD and kuru, the transmissible brain disease discovered in Papua New Guinea in 1957 which is associated with cannibalism. However, kuru was probably transmitted by a combination of contact with infectious brain tissue and poor hygiene, rather than by eating infected flesh.

In his Nobel Prize-winning lecture, published in full in *Science* (1977) vol 197, p943, D Carleton Gajdusek showed that kuru was much more prevalent among women than men, that while women participated in the butchery of the corpses men rarely if ever did so, but both sexes ate the flesh after cooking it. Gajdusek noted that women contaminated themselves, their infants and toddlers with heavily infected brain tissue when the skull of a dead victim was opened and, pointing out that they "rarely if ever washed" suggested that infection "was most probably through the cuts and abrasions of the skin, or from nose picking, eye rubbing, or mucosal injury".

If non-oral routes are indeed the principal ones for the transmission of encephalopathies, then one might expect to find the following:

1. Humans would probably not contract anything from eating scrapie-infected meat. For sheep at least, the experience of the last 200 years would seem to support this view.

2. Humans who handle "volatile" scrapie-infected material, such as dry, rendered bone meal made from contaminated sources, could well become infected by inhaling dust. Could this explain CJD in dairy farmers?

3. Humans who handle less dusty material, such as infected nervous tissue in abbatoirs, and who practise sensible hygiene, should be less at risk.

4. Beef from herds which have never been exposed to contaminated meal should not contract BSE, which is true for organic farms.

5. Cows fed on infected bone meal would become infected through the nose rather than the mouth. When cows eat meal they push their entire muzzle well into the food.

Research needs to establish the normal transmission route of these agents before we conclude that eating of, as opposed to non-oral contamination with, infected material is responsible for encephalopathies in humans.

Dr J S KNOWLAND
Department of Biochemistry
University of Oxford

Sir: Dr H C Grant (letter, 27 March) states that only people of a rare genotype are susceptible to CJD. Would it not be possible to carry out a mass genetic screening of the population, so that those of this genotype could take precautions, rather than indulge in mass panic?

RICHARD M PREVETT
London W1

Sir: Yes, buy organic beef if you must – but nobody has to eat beef at all. In all my 84 years I have never eaten beef or any other meat, poultry or fish, and I'm considered pretty fit for my age. Let it be said at once, loudly and clearly, slaughtering animals for food is a dreadful way to make a living.

MAURICE WALSHE
Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire

Fishing for a licence

Sir: Your leading article on the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (19 March) rightly identifies the scale of the fishing capacity of modern fleets as a key factor in the problem of overfishing.

However, you say that the size of national fleets is not restricted. Since the beginning of 1995 all member states have been required to operate a licensing system for fishing vessels. In the case of the UK, restrictive licensing was introduced in 1983.

There is indeed an active market in fishing licences (which has allowed nationals of other member states to buy into the UK fleet). It is arguable that the problem lies with the lack of an associated market in quota rights, which could enable fishing firms to adjust their effort to the catches available. The alternative is that governments must attempt to control fleet capacity by means of licensing and decommissioning schemes, which requires them continually to "second guess" improvements in efficiency (for example through technological progress).

AARON HATCHER
University of Portsmouth

Adoption a fair solution for parent and child

Sir: Polly Toynbee opposes the Government's intention to encourage single mothers to allow their babies to be adopted ("Why the state can't fix the family", 27 March).

Her arguments are strident and somewhat garbled. She draws attention to the cost to the taxpayer of maintaining single mothers in poor conditions which blight the children's chances, dismisses as "sentimental nonsense" the notion that a baby is always better off at the breast of its biological mother and berates the state's incompetence at looking after children in care; all of which would seem to point to adoption as a reasonable alternative.

She criticises adoption because half of adopted women and 30 per cent of men go in search of their natural mothers. It could equally be said that half of the women and 70 per cent of men do not seek out their mothers. My wife and I adopted three infants 40 to 35 years ago. They have become balanced, independent adults. They have not sought their natural parents, nor have other adopted children whom we know. This is anecdotal evidence, but so is much of Ms Toynbee's case.

Ideally, children should be brought up by one or both parents within the wider family. Some able single parents are capable of going it alone, but if a single parent is, for whatever reason, unable responsibly to take on the rearing of the child, adoption might seem a fair solution for both parent and child. Single parents should not be forced into adoption, but they should be free to choose it as an option.

WILLIAM M JOHNSTON
Woolstone, Milton Keynes

All actors, male or female

Sir: Rebecca Front (Between the Lines, 27 March) was described as an "actress and comedian". This highlights an anomaly. Can the distinction between male and female actors be justified? Should it not be "actor and comedian", and should not the work of all actors, regardless of sex, be judged together for awards such as the Oscars?

MARK FURSE
Brill, Buckinghamshire

Science cannot give political answers

Sir: John Gillott (letter, 28 March), berates Ulrich Beck for talking about the "mistakes and shifting stages of scientific knowledge". Mr Gillott seems to think that there is a single rational approach to scientific issues which will lead us to social progress. Science works in terms of probability, not certainty. The knowledge it gives is essentially provisional.

A glance at last summer's issues of *Nature* or *New Scientist* shows scientists adopting a range of positions over the proposed sinking of Brent Spar. Within the past ten days we have seen some scientific experts in the BSE-CJD field tell us that they have stopped eating beef, others that they are even prepared to let their children eat it.

The widespread misunderstanding that science gives certainty is dangerous because it opens us to the misuse of science as rhetorical tool. This was done by ministers when for the best part of a decade they invoked science as proof of their assertion that British beef was completely safe.

DAVID PACKHAM
School of Materials Science
University of Bath

Sir: Several of your correspondents claim that science cannot tell us about morality, art, love, or the essence of humanity. This is not a self-evident fact but an outdated ideological dogma.

Altruism, social cohesion, pleasure, ritual display, emotion, spirituality, and all the rest are dispositions of the brain, mediated by body chemicals, built up by genes, and sieved by evolution. All these may be amenable to experiment, demonstrable by mathematical modelling, and traceable through archaeology and anthropology. The only limits to science are those imposed by our ancient enemies, ignorance and fear.

NICHOLAS WIDDOWS
London NW3

Parks revival

Sir: I commend your suggestion (leading article, 27 March) for the proposed rehabilitation of public parks.

Would this not be the ideal way of spreading Lottery money more equally throughout the country to mark the millennium? Each park helped by such a scheme would require a ring fence as well as adequate patrols. If people living in the immediate vicinity could be encouraged to join management committees, so much the better.

ALAN R YOUNG
Dudley
West Midlands

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Help for Kabul

Sir: Your picture story on Afghanistan (23 March) highlights a huge humanitarian catastrophe, caused by over 15 years of civil war.

The main problems facing displaced people are lack of fuel and food. The International Red Cross has been distributing food to 9,000 of Kabul's most vulnerable families with the Afghan Red Crescent. A food-for-work project is also operating in a 35,000-hectare area of what used to be a minefield. Displaced people have made tools and ploughed and sown the land. The first harvest will be in May. The Red Cross is running two main surgical hospitals in Kabul and fully supports four more with medical supplies.

JOHN ENGLISH
British Red Cross
London SW1

20,000 leagues under a Melvyn Bragg

I bring you today the first extract from the new sex 'n' shipping novel 'Woman Overboard' by Elsie Fairfax, soon to be a major paperback.

Part One: A Stranger Comes To Call.

MILES KINGTON

Polly had now been at sea for 67 days and was beginning to get tired of baked beans. She had also begun to get tired of the endless sunshine of the Pacific Ocean, of the endless hissing of her radio, of endless grappling with sheets and sails, and of the novels of Melvyn Bragg.

"If only I had brought a book by some other author," she often thought, but she had really had no choice. When you get sponsorship from the Cumbrian Book Authority, you are contractually obliged to take only Melvyn Bragg's novels on board, and nobody else's, and each Melvyn Bragg book on loan has a built-in microchip so that they can monitor your progress by satellite from Carlisle Library and spot immediately if you have skipped a few pages or even thrown one overboard.

But what she missed more than anything else was a *man*. Not a special man, just ... a man. She had been 67 days at sea without seeing a man and she had got tired of Melvyn Bragg's photo on the back of his last novel round about day 14.

"Of course," she said out loud in a rather poor Afrikaans accent, "it's also 67 days since I last saw a woman, apart from my own reflection, so why don't I feel bad about being without a woman to talk to? Why do I miss men more?"

One of the few advantages of being alone at sea is that you can talk out loud as much as you want to. You can shout and rant or sing Gershwin or even practise accents that are notoriously hard to imitate, such as South African and Geordie, all without anyone listening or telling you to pipe down.

"What makes it so hard to take," she said, in a wavering Newcastle accent, "is round about sunset, when you want a man to come along and offer you a little aperitif to kick off the evening ..."

"Well," said a voice right behind her, "how about a gin and tonic or a small spritzer?"

Polly wheeled round in utter astonishment. There, not 10 feet away, was a large motor yacht which must have stolen up on her unawares, and standing in the stern quite the most handsome man she had ever seen.

"Were you listening to what I was saying just now?" said Polly.

"Couldn't help it," said the man, smiling a big, handsome smile that filled the horizon and her heart.

"Name's Jack Lancegood. Out for a cruise from Hobart way. Now, how's about that drink?"

Polly was just about to reply in the affirmative when there was an interruption. A woman appeared on the deck of the motor yacht holding a gun. She looked at the man. She looked at Polly. She looked pretty mad.

"So, Jack Lancegood, there *is* another woman, is there?" she said.

Then she levelled the gun at the man. "I told you what would happen if I ever caught you at it again!"

"Honest, sweetheart," said Jack. "I just happened to spot this lone mariner passing by and thought it was only polite to offer her a little something."

"Excuses, excuses, excuses!" said the woman. "You always have a good story and I always swallow it. Well, not this time!"

And to Polly's amazement she shot her companion, who fell groaning in the scuppers.

The woman then turned the gun on Polly.

"Look," said Polly," Don't shoot ... I really must be ... I have to ... there's a Melvyn Bragg novel I've got to ..."

To her great surprise and relief the woman lowered the gun and smiled.

"Men!" she said. "Aren't they the pits?

"Now let's tip him overboard and get on with that drink he promised you. I'm dying for one myself!"

Coming soon: Is Jack Lancegood really dead? What does this strange woman really want? Will Polly break the rules of the single-handed, round-the-world race if she leaves her own craft to cross to another boat for a quick drink and a passionate lesbian affair?

And what will the folk in Carlisle do when they realise that Polly hasn't turned a page of her current Melvyn Bragg novel in days?

Don't miss the next instalment of 'Woman Overboard'!

Jobless Germany can learn from us

Europe's recession-hit giant must ask whether it can afford to preserve costly industrial harmony

HAMISH McRAE

There are beggars in Frankfurt. As an antidote to the endless gloom about the state of the UK – the lacklustre economy, the sense of insecurity, the incompetence of our government – I went to have a look at the financial capital of what most people would still consider Europe's most successful economy.

If Germany's economic might gives it authority in shaping European politics – for example at the Inter-Governmental Conference in Turin today – it gives it even greater influence in shaping European economics. There is a German way of doing things: ordered, regulated, secure, based on consensus, with emphasis on manufacturing excellence. At the other extreme, I suppose, is our way of doing things: entrepreneurial, deregulated, insecure, confrontational, with emphasis on flexible services.

Ten years ago this would have been no contest. Of course consensus was better than confrontation, order better than chaos. Even two or three years ago, while some aspects of the British reforms of the 1980s were being admired and imitated, there was no real feeling of a need to learn. Now the scales between the two visions are more evenly balanced. In the German financial and business community there is a deep concern. Business knows that the German way of doing things has to change, but most of the rest of the country won't accept it. The reason for the need to change is told in one word: unemployment. Germany is back in recession.

Frankfurt is superficially as prosperous as ever. But wait: aside from those beggars, the shops are half-full and there are hems cut to one-third of their original tag; there are retail sites to let; restaurants are empty: there are streams of taxis waiting for hire. Things may be fine for those in work, but many are clearly finding the going tough.

This shows in the figures. Headline unemployment is now over 11 per cent, against 7.9 per cent in Britain. Even allow for seasonal factors and look only at the former West Germany, and it is still over 9 per cent and rising. West Germany has lost more than a million jobs in the past four years; in Germany's showcase industry, plant and machinery, employment has fallen from 1,250,000 in 1991 to 980,000 last December.

German industry is going through the seemingly endless downsizing which we have learnt to accept here. In one sense this is a sign of its excellence, its ability to reorganise itself when times are tough. At one extreme, the great Daimler-Benz pulled the plug on its loss-making associate, the Dutch aircraft firm Fokker, and made enormous cutbacks at its subsidiary AEG. The restructuring of the chemicals company Hoechst has been just as remarkable because it has been done in less of a crisis atmosphere.

Middle-sized engineering companies, too, have responded to pressure by improving, yet again, their performance. VDMA, the plant and machinery firms' association, explained that its members produce 20,000 different products of which – and this is the remarkable bit – 4,000-5,000 are new each year. They succeed by making custom-built products, designed in close co-operation with the customers. Take the common criticism of German engineers in the past, that they produced products which were over-engineered. Fine, they make them simpler. Just a few days ago there was a story about a piece of heating equipment that used to have 170 parts and is now made with 60.

Unions are part of decision making, they come to the round table

It is hard to convey this sense of excellence that is so deeply rooted in German mechanical engineering ... except perhaps to BMW or Mercedes drivers. Up to now every time the mark rises, every time wages are pushed up, every time the government imposes some new regulation or tax, somehow the sheer quality of the German engineering industry has enabled it to continue to hold its own. It is the best.

But it is also hard to convey the sense of shock last year, when, after an excellent recovery from the early 1990s recession, German manufacturers suddenly found themselves plunged back into trouble. They had done all the right things in 1993 and 1994, slimmed down, simplified ranges, cut out waste; exports had boomed. Then in February and March last year the mark shot up by 6 per cent and the employers agreed to pay increases of more than 4 per cent. Foreign customers stopped buying. Suddenly the whole of German industry had to cut all over again.

The result is insecurity. All the familiar concerns of the UK are now heard in Germany: the fact that companies get rid of some of the most experienced people first, because they are the most expensive or closest to retirement age; or that young graduates, even engineering ones, cannot get jobs.

If there is an obvious parallel there are, however, two key differences from the UK. One is the position of the unions; the other the attitude of the government.

Unlike in the UK, in Germany the unions are still part of the decision-making process. They still come to Helmut Kohl's "round table", prompting the comment that round tables are a dangerous form of furniture. To a British observer this all feels very 1970s: a much more sophisticated level of debate than the beer and sandwiches at No 10, and of course applied to a vastly more competent economy, but the same search for consensus at whatever ultimate cost.

And government is different. Mr Kohl's ruling coalition has just won a resounding victory in the regional elections. Voters are self-evidently happy. They want an interventionist state. They do not mind high tax rates, or at least they accept them if there are sufficient loopholes. (Taxes are high not only at the top. It is astonishing that, for those who earn between £6,750 and £9,500, every extra mark earned is offset by cuts in social security payments or increases in taxes and social security contributions.)

If voters back your policies there is no political pressure to change. If German industry is as wonderful as ever, government lags far behind.

It is always dangerous to project one country's experience on to another. The German way forward will be completely different from our own, not only because we have a different industrial structure but because we have different attitudes. Yet three people I spoke to volunteered that Germany could learn a lot from British labour market reforms. One of them said British industry was now taken very seriously as a competitor. Times have changed.

Everyone loves a good uniform

Civvy street's flunkies need a lesson from the Navy in how to dress, says **Jonathan Glancey**

Every girl (and many a boy) loves a sailor. Quite why, I do not know. It could, of course, be the natty, flared trousers. After all, they do have a habit of flapping back into fashion every few years and young girls will develop seasonal crushes on them. Though that still doesn't explain the boys.

Sailors began wearing flares in 1854 and enjoyed cutting and sewing their own in a number of fetching styles until 1914 when standard issue bell bottoms became the order of the day. Only this week, the first review of Royal Navy dress in 25 years found in favour of bell bottoms. The new-look flares will not be quite as wide as they were in days of yore, but, as Commander David Hobbs who conducted the review pointed out, "the slight flare looked just right. So we decided to keep some of the old tradition."

Like other examples of traditional dress, sailors' bell bottoms have, or had, a purpose: they were easy to roll up when Jack Tar had to climb rope rigging. They are also highly distinctive and this, in part, is why the Navy should be patted on the back (nothing more familiar than that, mind you) for retaining a form of dress by which we can spot one of Her Majesty's sailors a league away.

Uniforms – ceremonial uniforms in particular – ought to be distinctive. Such a uniform encourages a sense of belonging in the mind of the wearer and allows the public to distinguish between services, ranks and roles. In today's cities, homogeneous uniforms are proliferating; private traffic wardens, deregulated bus drivers, shopping mall and supermarket security guards, even postmen, all sport a banal American-style mall uniform. It makes them look sloppy, silly and unprofessional: the uniforms they wear bear little or no relation to British tradition nor to the work they do. It is hard to tell them apart.

The right uniform – well designed, distinctive and practical – should be something to be proud of, not because uniforms have a fetishistic value (although they do), but because, at their best, they reflect the value of the skill or job of the wearer.

Today, the British fail to design uniforms or, in many instances, do not like wearing them (even though each social tribe, from Sloane Rangers to Toon Army rankers can be recognised by the "uniform" it wears). The old adage that the Germans lost the Second World War, but had the best uniforms, holds true: British soldiers, no matter how dutiful or brave, were often made to look foolish, as family albums prove.

Even when decent uniforms have been provided (London bus drivers until the mid-Sixties), engine drivers (until British Rail replaced British Railways), they have often been replaced by designs from couturiers wading out of their depth. The new-look British Rail uniforms of 1964 were much ridiculed by cartoonists, and rightly so. At a stroke, they belittled the dignity of those who wore them.

This made a kind of perverse sense, for just when the role of engine driver was reduced from that of craftsman to machine-tending worker, so his new-age uniform diminished him. The same was true of London bus drivers. In the Thirties, these highly trained knights of the road were (along with top-flight engine drivers) among the best paid workers in Britain. Today's deregulated bus companies pay peanuts to their drivers, a minority of whom hurl busloads of pensioners, tots and shoppers around corners at uncaring speeds. They dress in a guise that reflects their reduced status and, it often appears, skill.

The only smart civilian uniforms are those worn in fast-food joints

Air stewards ("Hi, I'm Jason, let me know if I can help you") and stewardesses ("any drink or hot beverage at all for you sir?") are also dressed in dowdy building society uniforms that lack the grace and undoubted sex appeal of cabin crews from the era of the Lockheed Constellation and Boeing Stratocruiser.

The only ostensibly smart civilian uniforms we see day to day are those worn in fast-food joints, holiday camps and theme parks. These are not well designed uniforms – far from it – yet they are washed, cleaned, pressed and worn with a hint of pride.

Years ago, civilian uniforms took their cue from the military. Perhaps it is time they did so again. For if bell bottoms help every girl (and many a boy) to love a sailor, think what a stylish uniform could do for the driver of a Number 68 bus.

Is selection good for the kids?

The Government wants schools to select more pupils. Here, two experts debate the issues

In a class of their own? Girls at a Reading comprehensive that has introduced a grammar stream

Photograph: John Lawrence

The return of grammar schools will reinforce social divisions, says Tony Mooney

Lord Tebbit led us to believe that the Sixties were decadent years, but for those of us just starting our teaching careers they were the most exciting of times. Comprehensive schools were beginning to take root and 11-plus failures like myself who, in the earlier years of our lives, had felt humiliated by the social stigma attached to us, welcomed *them* with open arms. No longer would future generations of *children* have to be branded like cattle at a most sensitive time of their development. Selection was out.

Thirty years after the legislation that brought in the comprehensives we are now seeing systematic attempts by Conservative and Labour politicians to undermine their credibility. Harrier Harman will be sending her son to a grammar school miles from her home. David Blunkett asks us to "read his lips" about there being no academic selection under a Labour government while at the same time suggesting that comprehensives have failed.

More sinister is the work of the Tories who hold the levers of power. Step by step they are introducing measures designed to distort the comprehensive ideal and bring back the grammar schools for which so many of them yearn.

Yesterday's speech by Education Secretary Gillian Shephard was yet one more indication of the open dislike that the Tories have for comprehensives. By further increasing the proportion of students that schools will be able to select by ability, she has confirmed my worst fears that we have merely reached another staging post on the road to full selection.

The effect of these measures will be to intensify the dogfight between local comprehensives that has emerged in recent years. These measures will ensure that many of our comprehensives, situated in unattractive, deprived areas of our cities, will rapidly become the secondary moderns of yesteryear.

How will the schools, with their new powers of selection, choose their pupils? You can put your mortgage on the fact that most will try to incorporate an interview into their procedures. Interviews give you a clear indication of the social-class of the parents and headteachers will be falling over themselves to try to offer places to the supportive middle-classes.

It would be terrible shame if the education system was forced into selection. Our comprehensives are not the pits of mixed-ability teaching that right-wing politicians would have you believe. Most have been into "setting" and "banding" by ability for years. Many recognise that for many of our students such arrangements get the best results.

I might be wrong, but I strongly believe that the push for selection once again highlights the social class divisions that exist in our society. The activists in favour of selection secretly believe the bright middle-class youngsters at secondary level ought not to have to tolerate the behaviour of their more roughly hewn peers from working-class homes. An out-of-date theory? If you don't believe me, talk at length to some of the middle-class parents in Islington, where I live, who are about to choose secondary schools for their children.

The writer is headteacher of Rutlish School, London Borough of Merton.

Mixed-ability classes prevent pupils from reaching their potential, says Sheila Lawlor

Selection for critics and protagonists alike, is a highly moral matter. As Mrs Thatcher put it to those who claimed in her 1987 election campaign that grant-maintained schools would become selective, "You may think it wrong. But I, I do not think it wrong."

The contenders in moral debate often couch their arguments in terms of a conflict of interests between individual children and the wider schoolgoing population. These positions are almost impossible to reconcile, no matter what education research is deployed to carry the day. Moral certainties are held so hard.

None the less there are practical reasons for selecting pupils by ability. It is difficult to stretch each child to the full, if the pace of teaching is pitched to either end of the ability range or, for that matter, steers the safe middle course. One way round this has been to organise classrooms in ways that allow for individual (or group) work. The lesson has been that superb teaching will triumph. But for the less than superb, a high success rate is physically or intellectually difficult, day in day out. And teachers face the additional challenge today of children who are less accustomed than in the past to the unquestioned acceptance of authority. The consequences of family breakdown also feed into the classroom.

But there is one reason above all for selection – and that is the pursuit of academic excellence. The serious issue we must face is to restore the intellectual framework of education, which has seeped away through the cracks of successive reforms as each reforming minister has opened up the relatively fragile institution of the school to the forces of a progressive state, local and central.

Comprehensive schooling on a mass scale became possible only by making the classroom a place where pupils learn how to "do" things rather than learn how to think. The teacher, in the degrading speak of the Eighties, became the *facilitator* who enabled children to acquire skills. In practice, the distinction was necessary given the difficulty of imparting knowledge over a wide ability range, and the exams and curriculum followed suit. The anti-intellectual levels to which education in this country – and this country alone – have descended has been partly the consequence of the dogmatic imposition of comprehensive schooling.

Selection is not the only basis for successful teaching. Certainly, it should not be for the state to dictate to schools and parents the kind of teaching they must follow. That choice must be for the school and parents, not the state, central or local. What is needed is a liberal framework where government stands aside for schools and parents to decide.

There are pragmatic reasons for setting, streaming or selecting children on grounds of ability. It may help teachers to teach and stretch their pupils. But there are more important grounds: the future of education in this country, as a matter of intellectual endeavour, makes the further use of selection essential.

The writer is director of Politeia, the Forum for Social and Economic Thinking. She was formerly deputy director of the Centre for Policy Studies.

Britain's failure to back an EU plan for parental leave is wrong and out of touch, says **Helen Wilkinson**

Litmus test of family values

Today, the European Council of Ministers is likely to agree to give all parents a minimum of three months unpaid parental leave. For many countries this is hardly a radical step. Germany already offers up to three years off and Sweden up to 15 months off. Yet Britain, alone among the European Union's 16 members, will not be signing up for the directive. As far as our politicians in Westminster are concerned, parental leave is now off the agenda.

But whatever Britain's attitude to Europe, it is quite clear that debate about parenting is intense in millions of households around the country. What was once just a personal issue is fast becoming a political one as three powerful forces converge to put the issue on the agenda in the UK.

The first force for change is mounting pressure from working mothers and fathers. People are agonising over the stresses and strains of being a modern-day parent as they juggle conflicting priorities and embark on endless battles over who will take time off and who will come home early from work. These "parenting pains" are a clear factor in relationship breakdown: the number of divorces granted to couples with children under five has increased by two-thirds since the mid-Seventies. Few women want to sacrifice their jobs and careers to become permanent full-time mothers. Growing numbers of men want to play a more active role as fathers. Both are increasingly looking to the Government, as well as employers, to give them greater flexibility.

The second factor is an increased awareness that direct parental care is better for children in the early years of their life than other forms of childcare. Even in countries such as Sweden, which has a high-quality childcare network, parental leave has become so much part of the culture that there is now almost no use of childcare for children under the age of one.

The third, less visible, force for change is demography – a fifth of women born in the Sixties are predicted to remain childless. Many young women see parenting as an unattractive prospect – costly, hard work and undervalued. In the long-run, if many more opt out of parenthood, future generations of workers and taxpayers may well be inadequate to sustain a growing elderly population. Women will need help and encouragement to become mothers.

Fortunately, one of the advantages of being the laggard of Europe is that we can learn from experience elsewhere. In our extensive Demos survey of 16 countries with parental leave we found that schemes need to earmark a non-transferable period of leave to encourage male take-up. Financial support is also needed, otherwise few can afford to take leave. Perhaps most important of all, the scheme should cater for the self-employed and people in small firms as well as large organisations.

Many of the best schemes from abroad involve substantial costs. For policy-makers there is the difficult question of how these should be shared between taxpayers, employers and parents themselves. But it is already apparent from our study that employers' initial hostility to parental leave often evaporates once schemes are in place, not least because many find that productivity and employee commitment is improve. Even the burden on public finances turns out to be lower than at first appears, since the jobs created for people filling in for parents on leave reduces unemployment costs and boosts tax revenues.

In the long run, the pressure for more balanced lives, and for a welfare system that is better suited to a world where both men and women work, is mounting inexorably. Britain happily subsidises everything from farming to home ownership. There is a new pressing claim on resources. Parental leave could soon become a litmus test of whether our politicians really are serious about family values, regardless of our absence in Brussels today.

'Parental leave – the price of family values?' by Helen Wilkinson and Ivan Briscoe is available from Demos, 9 Bridewell Place, London EC4V 6AP. Tel: 0171 353 4479.

obituaries / gazette

Brigadier Roscoe Harvey

Roscoe Harvey was renowned as the finest armoured leader of the Second World War, and later controlled the discipline of the British Turf for 24 years.

A superlative horseman, steeplechase rider, polo player, pig-sticker and a wonderful man to hounds, Harvey excelled as the complete cavalry commander, and was dubbed the Prince Rupert of modern warfare. Of his three DSOs, won during the Second World War, at least one should have been a VC. The 26-times champion jockey the late Sir Gordon Richards described Harvey as "the greatest man racing has known in my lifetime".

And, in Cotswold retirement, the wittiest, most generous host, breeding and racing good steeplechasers in competition with his great friend and exact contemporary the Queen Mother, he will also be remembered as the man who once drove miles down a motorway in the wrong direction – and got away with it.

He was born Charles Barnet Harvey in 1900, in Sarawak, and came to England a year later on the death of his father, who, with his friend the white raja Sir Charles Brooke, was with the wealthy Borneo Company. Harvey was riding as soon as he could walk, and foxhunting throughout his youth.

A devout Roman Catholic, he was educated at Downside and Sandhurst, and was an outstanding games player despite an inherited short-sightedness which meant his wearing thick spectacles. Foxhunting, racing, and point-to-pointing, he was commissioned in 1920 into the 10th Royal Hussars, the great love of his life, then stationed at The Curragh.

Once, forced to put up two pounds overweight in an Irish steeplechase, he was likened by a senior officer to Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, the obese silent film star, and the name stuck.

After a distinguished spell at the Weedon Cavalry School, he was appointed Regimental Equitation Officer and, although he never had much time for show jumping, for a joke entered a troop horse at the Royal International Horse Show and won his way to the final jump-off for the world's biggest prize, the King George V Gold Cup, at Olympia.

One of the finest amateur riders in Britain, Harvey suffered his worst fall in the National Hunt Chase at Cheltenham when the glass of his broken spectacles had to be dug out from between his upper eyelids and his skull. Riding in races big and small including the Grand National, he remained too a dedicated soldier.

During two years in Egypt he ran a successful racing stable organising some profitable coups. "The six best years of my life" in India followed. First as an adjutant, and then as a major commanding a squadron, he enjoyed not only the soldiering but played polo up to international standard, and became so good at pig-sticking that he was most unlucky to be defeated in the final of the Blue Riband of that sport, the Kadir Cup.

Back in Britain Harvey was involved in the mechanisation of his squadron, although at the end of the first course he attended his report read: "This officer shows absolutely no aptitude for mechanisation whatsoever." It was not long before he was recognised as an outstanding armoured leader.

With Harvey as second in command, the regiment went to France soon after the start of the Second World War and, although hopelessly under-equipped, had suffered only comparatively light personnel casualties when they were evacuated back to England. Promoted to lieutenant-colonel, Harvey first formed the 23rd Hussars and then, fulfilling his greatest ambition, commanded his own regiment, the 10th Hussars, arriving in the Western Desert at the end of November 1941. Twice in the next six months, although hopelessly out-tanked and out-gunned, Harvey inspired the 10th and the other two members of the gallant 2nd Armoured Brigade by leading from the front with the "cavalry dash" which frequently terrified friend as well as foe.

Although in both battles, at Saunnu and then at the Knightsbridge Box, Harvey lost nearly all his tanks, including inevitably his own, Rommel's powerful thrusts were repelled. It is fair to say that at Knightsbridge – where with 30 inferior tanks he found himself engaged in a fierce battle with 160 formidable German Panzers – Harvey halted the German advance for long enough for the British army to retreat behind the Alamein line, thereby saving Egypt and the Mediterranean.

By 6pm on the last day at Knightsbridge the regiment had fought until they had no shells left or tanks fit to fight. Harvey's own tank was shot from under him and he walked about amidst all the shot and shell saying: "Don't give one yard. Please do not give one yard. Stay where you are and fight." The position was saved and Harvey received an immediate DSO.

Back in Cairo for a refit, he wrote to his friend the Jockey Club steward Sir Humphrey de Trafford, who rushed into White's, brandishing the letter saying: "All is not lost! Here's a senior officer in the Middle East who not only thinks that racing will start again, but also wants to be part of it as a Stipendary Steward."

Harvey was in the thick of the Battle of Alamein, promoted to brigadier, commanding the 4th Light Armoured Brigade. After fighting his way to Tripoli, where he held a race meeting with Arab ponies, he took over 8th Armoured Brigade and struck up a working partnership with General "Tiny" Freyberg, the New Zealand Division's commander, First World War hero and VC. With the help of the legendary American General Patton they defeated the Afrika Korps in Tunisia, earning Harvey another immediate DSO and two mentions in dispatches.

Brought back to England, Harvey took over 29th Armoured Brigade in 11th Armoured Division and, as the spearhead of the follow-up troops, landed in France on 13 June 1944. After some particularly bloody battles around Caen, the breakthrough was achieved. Harvey's brigade moved from the Normandy beaches to capture Antwerp, whose local paper ran the headline, "The Liberation of Antwerp Under the Command of Brigadier Harvey DSO".

General Sir Cecil ("Monkey") Blacker, then a major, describes the scene:

> Once the battle was joined, the first thing we realised was that any failure to push ahead, even in the hairiest situation, would generate an even hairier situation back at brigade headquarters. An important element in a commander is the ability to make his troops feel less inclined to incur his displeasure than to face the enemy. The sight of Roscoe's Sherman tank following close behind with his faded red hat poking out of the turret was a considerable deterrent to any desire to linger. He must have made an enormous, unrivalled contribution to winning the war. His humour and imperturbability should never be allowed to conceal the remarkably tough, determined and inspiring character that lay behind them. He fully deserved his three DSOs.

Harvey: the Prince Rupert of modern warfare and Stewards' Secretary of the Jockey Club, 1946-70

In October Harvey earned his third DSO for "fine leadership, military skill and offensive spirit which permeated to all ranks", resulting in the capture of 700 determined prisoners and many German casualties in Venrai area. After helping to repel the Germans' final thrust in the Ardennes, re-equipped with new Comet tanks, Harvey set out on the last gallop, pausing only for the revolting, heart-breaking task of liberating Belsen.

Afterwards he made a final dash along the autobahns, defeating the Russians by a short head to Lubeck. He said later: "That final gallop was a close-run thing. I remember asking my driver, 'How fast are we going?' he replied 'Over 30, sir, still on the bridle.' "

As temporary divisional commander, Harvey was responsible for capturing the traitor William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw), who was tried and hanged, and also Heinrich Himmler, who cheated the hangman by committing suicide.

After the war, Roscoe Harvey organised and rode in a series of race meetings before making his way out of the Army to become Stewards' Secretary to the Jockey Club, in which capacity his own special form of discipline, preventing crime in racing rather than punishing it, was an unusual success. He still hunted regularly and rode many point-to-point winners in his retirement which was marred only by the death of his much-loved son Jeremy, killed in a motorcycle accident after a fall in a point-to-point at which Harvey also fell, breaking his collar-bone.

For a while Harvey was a very knowledgeable member of the British Boxing Board of Control and bred and owned some excellent jumpers. He and the Queen Mother vied with each other to win the Grand Military Gold Cup.

With his great friend the late Col "Babe" Moseley, Roscoe Harvey was driving home one of his splendid sports cars after a cavalry memorial parade in London when Moseley insisted on taking the wrong exit out of the Maidenhead roundabout on the M4, resulting in their rejoining the motorway in the wrong direction.

Harvey said: "We found ourselves in the fast lane and I said 'There's only one thing to do. It may be broad daylight but I will turn my headlights on and go like hell. So they won't know whether we're cops or robbers.' There weren't many people in the fast lane and we didn't meet anybody for a couple of miles. One man held his ground, but we avoided him and luckily hit nothing. When we got to the next exit there was a gap in the crash barrier and we skidded across to get out."

Of course a couple of earnest citizens reported them and, at the subsequent court case, after their solicitor had managed to persuade Babe Moseley not to say "It was my biggest thrill since riding in the National", they got off on the grounds that the roundabout was very badly signposted at the junction.

Roscoe Harvey was very proud, at the age of 95, to take the salute from his wheelchair at the big VJ Day parade in Stow-on-the-Wold. He was a hero to everyone who knew him.

Tim Fitzgeorge-Parker

Charles Barnet ("Roscoe") Harvey, soldier and racing administrator: born 19 July 1900; married 1926 Biddy Mylne (one daughter, and one son deceased; marriage dissolved), 1966 Betty Fraser-Horn (née Stoddard, died 1980); died 28 March 1996.

Shin Kanemaru

In a country generously endowed with political monsters, Shin Kanemaru was, for 20 years, the most colourful, the most powerful, the most ruthless, and the most corrupt figure in Japanese politics.

A backroom string-puller of the old school, he operated in the wings of the public stage and manipulated power through a matchless network of friends, protégés, minions, and stooges. As a senior member of the Liberal Democratic Party, he never rose higher than deputy Prime Minister; but, as leader of the LDP's biggest faction, four premiers owed their office to him. George Bush received him at the White House; he also maintained a notorious relationship with Kim Il Sung, the Stalinist dictator of North Korea. He was as comfortable with gangster bosses as with company presidents, and his spectacular fall from grace four years ago demonstrated that between politics, business and organised crime in Japan there is frequently no discernible difference.

Like the late Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, his friend, patron and fellow political delinquent, Kanemaru rose to power from a rural power base, far from the bright lights and relative political sophistication of Tokyo. He was born in 1914 in a remote village in the rural prefecture of Yamanashi to a family of brewers. A love of booze remained with him, and his sake-fuelled benders were the source of countless anecdotes, many of them told by Kanemaru himself.

As a child, he also acquired the habits of power which would later make him so infamous – bullying (his memoirs, *My History*, proudly record his early victories in schoolyard scraps) and disbursement of favours (he won popularity by distributing treats among his classmates). One hagiography records the occasion when young Shin helped one of his classmates overcome an unfortunate bed-wetting problem, by tying a rope around his penis.

As a student he was a poor scholar but a fine athlete. Tall and bulky (in later years, his neck disappeared almost completely, giving him his famous bulldog appearance), he was winning judo tournaments in his teens, and after scraping through university in Tokyo he worked briefly as a biology and martial arts teacher before being shipped off to Manchuria in 1937. A bout of pleurisy saved him from the nastier extremes of Japan's war and he returned to Yamanashi to marriage (leavened by a series of mistresses), and stewardship of the family sake business.

He entered politics in 1958, winning the first of 12 elections to his local constituency, and quickly put his robust talents to good use in the service of the LDP. During a bitter struggle over the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1960, the opposition attempted to prevent its ratification by physically blocking the entrance to the Diet chamber.

Kanemaru: forger of deals — Photograph: Camera Press

Hoisting him on his shoulders, Kanemaru carried the Speaker in through the mêlée, fending off parliamentary colleagues with judo moves and, by his own account, breaking his leg in the process.

But public confrontation was not Kanemaru's style: his true milieu was not the theatrics of the Diet, but the geisha houses and restaurants where the real decisions were, and still are, made. As Chairman of the LDP Diet Policy Committee, he gained a reputation as a miraculous forger of deals with the truculent Socialist opposition. After a rich meal and fine sake, served by elegant hostesses, Kanemaru would play mahjong with his political adversaries and deliberately lose. Then he would request co-operation in some knotty piece of legislation. "There must be at least 10 top opposition officials," he once boasted, "who would willingly do my bidding with a single phone call."

It was Tanaka who first put Kanemaru in the Cabinet, as Construction Minister from 1974 to 1976. He later served as head of the National Land Agency, then of the Defence Agency. As Construction Minister, he generously expressed his gratitude to his voters. "To say that I was involved in the construction of 99 per cent of bridges in Yamanashi," he shyly acknowledged, "would not be incorrect." A bridge in the prefecture still bears the name Shin-chan Bashi – "The Boy Shin's Bridge".

Despite his brazen politicking, Kanemaru inspired loyalty as well as respect. But his boldest and most brilliant move was a stunning act of betrayal. In 1985 he brutally broke away from Tanaka, by this time facing bribery charges over the Lockheed scandal, and set up his own political faction with the man who later became Prime Minister, Noboru Takeshita. It was an astonishing act of political parricide, a *coup d'état* which crippled the old man physically as well as politically – three weeks after the formation of the Takeshiat faction, Tanaka was paralysed by a stroke.

When another bribery case, the Recruit scandal, toppled a whole generation of LDP leaders, including Takeshita and another former Prime Minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone, the field was open for Kanemaru. The prime-ministership became his personal gift: probably accurately he said, "If I myself ever became premier, I would be a major embarrassment to Japan." But he acted like a head of state, visiting America, China and North Korea, where he provoked fury by apologising for Japanese aggression during the Second World War. For this act of unofficial diplomacy he narrowly escaped assassination by a right-wing gunman.

His ultimate demise was more predictable, and more appropriate. In 1992, the head of the Sagawa Kyubin trucking company was arrested for political presents worth 40 billion yen (some £250m by today's exchange rates of 160 yen to the pound). Electoral rules barred political donations of more than 1.5m yen; Kanemaru, it turned out, had received as much as 500m yen. Investigators raided his offices and removed boxes of share certificates and gold ingots. Even before the charges were formally filed, he resigned his party post and soon after his party seat and leadership of the faction.

Almost as shocking as the vastness of the corruption was the leniency of the sentence: Kanemaru was fined just 200,000 yen. At his trial he appeared in a wheelchair, pushed by a young aide. It looked like a bid for sympathy, but Kanemaru's career really was beyond salvation: in his last years he suffered increasingly from diabetes, which contributed to his final stroke yesterday morning.

Richard Lloyd Parry

Shin Kanemaru, politician: born Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan 17 September 1914; twice married (three sons); died Yamanashi 28 March 1996.

Simon Nowell-Smith

Each morning Simon Nowell-Smith's first order of business was scanning the daily newspaper obituaries. He would explain that he was checking to be sure he hadn't died without knowing it. That such a confusion might arise is not surprising, for if he had any views on the next world he must have imagined heaven as a place much like earth: a comfortable, hospitable house, filled with superb rare books, a serious cellar, set in a well-tended and abundant garden, and above all presided over by someone quite a lot like himself.

Although he will be remembered as a great bibliophile and bibliographical scholar of the highest order, his career was varied. His longest tenure was with the *Times*, where between 1932 and 1944 he was a member of the editorial staff, including two years as Assistant Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*; during the Second World War he was a member of the Naval Intelligence Unit.

He was appointed Secretary and Librarian of the London Library in 1950, a post from which he retired in 1956. Later positions included the presidency of the Bibliographical Society (1962-64); the Lyell Readership in Bibliography at Oxford (1965-66); and trusteeship of Dove Cottage (1974-82).

His lasting avocation, however, was rare books; the focus of his collection shifted over the years, and he would as readily sell ranks upon ranks of his treasures as buy them if a new interest took bold and he required cash to finance it. In the late 1970s, for example, he aimed to acquire first editions of the early volumes of most English poets from the Romantics to the present. In those days he would be equally gleeful in the possession of *Hwomely Rhymes* by William Barnes, the Dorset dialect poet; Erasmus Darwin's *Loves of the Plants* in pompous morocco-bound quarto; and Eliot's signed dedication to Virginia and Leonard Woolf who had printed his *Poems* (1919) and bound it in raucous homemade Bloomsbury wallpaper at the Hogarth Press.

The emphasis became rather more grand after 1983, the year he was asked to exhibit a selection of his books at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. On this occasion he decided to offer his very best and most coveted inscribed volumes, under the punning title "Wordsworth to Robert Graves and Beyond". This sepulchral wit was confined to the catalogue, however; the collection itself was at this time inspired with new life and immediately began to recreate itself.

In the years following the Bodleian exhibition, during which he had been buying and selling vigorously, visitors to his house were taken aback not only by the uncharacteristically huge gaps in the once-thronged shelves, but also by a bare wall where once a giant cabinet bookcase had stood, now summarily dismissed from service. Nowell-Smith had been getting rid of many minor items in order to buy into his new enthusiasm, first edition inscribed or association copies of the very best and greatest poets.

The idea of change in any collection was for him the signal fascination. A collection is an infinitely perfectable entity; the work is never quite done; the appetite is always whetted by the prospect of tracking down desiderata and of establishing their strange bibliographical histories, anomalies and absurdities. The focus of his own collection at any time was principally guided by literary taste; he was not a man who would collect what he could not read with delight. But the bonus of the book as an object with interest and qualities in its own right enhanced his pleasure. It was as well for his purse as for his taste that he was able to afford the very best of English literature.

Born in 1909, Simon Nowell-Smith was educated at Sherborne, where his father, Nowell Smith, a former Fellow of Magdalen, Oxford, was headmaster, and at New College, where he read Greats. Although he lived in London for many years, Nowell-Smith never really left Oxford. His principal dwellings were in Ewelme in the Fifties and Sixties, and Headington Quarry from the late Sixties (only in the late Eighties did he move into Headington itself, where he spent his last three years in a nursing home).

After the death of his wife Marion in 1977, he felt his rambling stone house, Quarry Manor, was too much for a single man, and so built himself an elegant bungalow at the bottom of his large garden; the new abode was quickly dubbed "Quarry Minor". From this house, after a prolonged period of bereavement, he began to re-establish both his collection of books and his wide circle of friends. Handsome even in old age, he reverted to an earlier sartorial wit, sporting a selection of unusual ties (his favourite was one made of red lamé), a trilby and a walking stick, he could often be seen in the Bodleian working on his latest bibliographical project, or buying cheeses and coffee in the covered market, or taking people to lunch. In 1986 he married Judith Adams, an American art-book dealer resident in England.

He was the author of six books of his own, notably *The Legend of the Master* (1947), on Henry James; *Letters to Macmillan* (1967), a history of the publishing house; and *International Copyright Law and the Publisher* (1968), still a standard work on the subject. He kept his literary output very much in the background, and would deprecate past achievements; he was made uneasy by ostentation and was embarrassed by eulogy. An encomiastic account of his bibliographical career by one of his acolytes was subject to intense editing and modification before it was reluctantly allowed into the *Book Collector*; he would not permit himself to be compared to the famous men of antiquarian books; the charming portrait photograph of him which hangs alongside other luminaries such as T.S. Eliot in the stairwell of the London Library worried and distressed him in the implied comparison.

Nowell-Smith: sepulchral wit
Photograph: London Library

Appreciation of simple pleasures remained with Simon Nowell-Smith always. He loved parodies, doggerel, limericks, and clerihews (which he composed readily, often in Greek). He grew fruit and vegetables and until late in life made his own bread. He was unfailingly generous to his friends in matters large and small, offering a Chassagne-Montrachet for lunchtime drinking, or lending sums of money to those who seemed to require it. Although he claimed to be a great snob, in fact he loathed pretension of any kind, and to those who did not properly understand his habit of cutting people for this fault seemed mercurial.

He looked at the obituaries every day as a sort of recursive joke. He himself wrote plenty of them for the *Times*, but only because they had the inestimable advantage of being about other people. He would regard all tributes to himself with dismay, including this one.

Claire Preston

Simon Harcourt Nowell-Smith, writer, collector and librarian: born Winchester 5 January 1909; editorial staff, the Times *1932-44, Assistant Editor,* Times Literary Supplement *1937-39; Secretary and Librarian, London Library 1950-56; Secretary, Hospital Library Services Survey 1958-59; President, Bibliographical Society 1962-64; married 1938 Marion Crichton (died 1977; two sons, one daughter), 1986 Judith Adams; died Headington, Oxfordshire 28 March 1996.*

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

ELLIOTT: On 18 March 1996, to Andrew and Beverley, a son, Alexander Michael, a brother to Benjamin.

MEDLICOTT: On 22 March at St Helier Hospital, to Debbie and William, a son, Thomas.

DEATHS

HENRY: Ruth Deborah, on 26 March 1996. Late of Darling Point, Sydney, Australia. Wife of Leon (deceased), sister of Nerida Goodman, mother and mother-in-law of Paula and Trevor Shaw, Judith and Jules Black, Alexa and Lawrence Gilbert (deceased), grandmother of Alexandra and Anthony, Georgina and Claudia, Nicholas and Duncan, great-grandmother of James and aunt of Jonathan and Paul.

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

BAER: Peter, who died on Friday 22 March, will be interred with a brief ceremony at Highgate Cemetery, Swains Lane, N6, shortly before 3pm on Tuesday 2 April 1996. Friends welcome.

For Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS Memoriam) please telephone 0171-293 2011 or fax 0171-293 2010. Charges are £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Birthdays

Sir Roy Beldam, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 71; Mr Henry Bellingham MP, 41; Mr Richard Rodney Bennett, composer, 60; Mr George Chisholm, trombonist, 81; Sir William Dugdale, director and chairman, General Utilities, 74; Miss Julie Goodyear, actress, 51; Miss Margaret Howard, broadcaster, 58; Mr Eric Idle, actor and comedian, 53; Mr Jack Jones, former trade union leader, 83; Sir Arthur Knight, former chairman, Courtaulds, 79; Mr Cecil Lewis, writer, 98; Mr John Major MP, Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, 53; Miss Ruby Murray, singer, 61; Mr Hugh Neill, Lord-Lieutenant for South Yorks, 75; Sir John Paul, former Governor-General of the Bahamas, 80; Mr Chapman Pincher, journalist, 82; Sir John Read, former chairman, TSB Group, 78; Ms Fiona Reynolds, Director, Council for the Protection of Rural England, 38; Lord Ross, Lord Justice-Clerk, 69; Miss Anne Stoddart, diplomat, 59; Mr John Suchet, television reporter and newscaster, 52; Lord Tebbit, former government minister, 65; Sir John Vane, pharmacologist, 69; The Right Rev James Weatherhead, Chaplain to the Queen in Scotland, 65.

Anniversaries

Births: Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens, architect, 1869; Dora de Houghton Carrington, artist, 1893; Sir William Turner Walton, composer, 1902. Deaths: Georges-Pierre Seurat, painter, 1891; Robert Falcon Scott, explorer, 1912; Vera Mary Brittain, author, 1970. On this day: the Royal Albert Hall was opened by Queen Victoria, 1871; the last flying bomb fell in England, 1945. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Armogastes, Masculas, Achirimus and Saturus, St Berthold, St Cyril of Heliopolis, St Gundleus or Woolo, St Gwladys, Saints Jonas, Barachisius and Others, St Mark of Arethusa and St Rupert of Salzburg.

Luncheons

Royal Albert Hall

Mr John Cleland, President, and the Council of the Royal Albert Hall were hosts at a luncheon held yesterday to mark the 125th anniversary of its opening by Queen Victoria.

Dinners

Free Church Federal Council

The Rev John Newton, Past Moderator, the Free Church Federal Council, was host at a dinner held yesterday evening by the Free Church Federal Council in the Connaught Rooms, London WC2, to mark the retirement of the Rev David Staple from the office of General Secretary. Dr John Biggs, Chairman of the Free Church Federal Council, and Canon Martin Reardon, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, spoke.

Amongst those present were:

Dr George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Mrs Carey; Cardinal Basil Hume; The Rev Janet Wootton, President of the National Free Church Women's Council and Mr Wootton; Mr Philip Mawer, Secretary General of the General Synod of the Church of England, and Mrs Mawer; Mr Paul Mendel, Director of the Council of Christians and Jews and Mrs Mendel; Mr Brian Beck, Secretary of the Methodist Conference, and Mrs Beck; The Rev Eric Brown, General Secretary of the Afro-West Indian Council of Churches; The Rev David Coffey, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, and Mrs Coffey; The Rev Tony Burnham and Mrs Burnham, the United Reformed Church.

British Library

The Second Annual Douglas Bryant Lecture, which was to have been held on 2 April, has had to be cancelled due to the withdrawal of the speaker, Dr James Billington. The British Library apologises for the short notice of this change, and regrets any inconvenience caused. For further information, telephone 0171-412 7760.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 6.14pm.

United Synagogue: 0171-387 4301. Federation of Synagogues: 0181-202 2265. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-580 1663. Reform Synagogues of Great Britain: 0181-349 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2573. New London Synagogue (Masorti): 0171-328 1626.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Princess Royal, Colonel-in-Chief, visits the Royal Logistic Corps Training Centre, The Princess Royal Barracks, Blackdown, Camberley, Surrey. The Duchess of Kent, Patron, the Royal Northern College of Music, attends the opera *Roberto Devereux* at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Simon Nowell-Smith

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THE INDEPENDENT • Friday 29 March 1996

CITY & BUSINESS EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

BUSINESS NEWS DESK: tel 0171-293 2530 fax 0171-293 2098

C&W in £33bn merger talks with BT

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Cable & Wireless last night ended weeks of speculation by confirming that it was in talks with BT that could lead to a £33bn merger of the groups and rewrite the map of the telecommunications industry.

The merger would also be by far the biggest ever in the UK, dwarfing last year's £9.3bn marriage of the Glaxo and Wellcome drugs companies.

The company was forced into making a statement after the stock market had closed after a surge in its own and BT's share price in late afternoon dealings. The shares soared amid intense rumours that previous one-off discussions between the arch-rivals had finally been revived.

C&W said: "The board of Cable & Wireless noted the recent movement in the share price. Cable & Wireless confirms that some exploratory discussions are being held with BT which may or may not lead to a merger of the two companies. A further statement will be made if appropriate although there is no immediate expectation of this."

BT has consistently refused to comment in recent weeks, but City sources say an approach was made to Cable & Wireless at the end of last year after the abrupt departure of both its chairman and chief executive.

Sir Iain Vallance, BT's chairman, is believed to be determined to acquire C&W but it is unlikely that anything could happen without the agreement of C&W and the blessing of the Government. The merger – with appropriate conditions – is unlikely to be resisted by ministers.

Any deal between BT and C&W would face formidable regulatory hurdles in Britain and Hong Kong, where C&W's most valuable asset is based - its 57.5 per cent stake in Hongkong Telecom. The merger would also encounter difficulties in Germany, where the two companies have stakes in rival telecommunications groups.

The merger would be the biggest in UK corporate history and would almost certainly involve the sale of Mercury Communications, C&W's UK arm and the main rival to BT. Don Cruickshank, the industry watchdog, said recently that the main issue for him in the event of any merger and subsequent disposal of Mercury would be the strength and commitment of the new owners.

The plan would also have to include a solution for Mercury One-2-One, C&W's mobile joint venture with US West, which competes with BT's Cellnet. There was speculation yesterday that BT might in some way hive off its 60 per cent stake in Cellnet, the balance of which is owned by Securicor.

Shares in C&W climbed 34p during the day to 511.5p, valuing the company at £11.3bn, while BT's rose by 14.5p to 348.5p, a valuation of £21.9bn. The surge spilled over to Wall street. American Depository Receipts in BT rose by more than $3 to $54.25 and C&W by $3 to $24⅜.

The negotiations at C&W are being conducted by Rod Olsen, acting chief executive and Brian Smith, non-executive chairman. The group has been actively attempting to recruit a new chief executive and an announcement had been expected within days. The talks with BT appear to have inevitably muddied the waters and C&W declined to comment on any potential management changes.

The driver for BT in acquiring C&W are its international activities, in particular the Hong Kong telecom stake and other operations in the Asia Pacific region. Sir Peter Bonfield, BT's new chief executive, has said within recent weeks that Asia Pacific is one region where BT must expand to ensure its future as a leading global player.

Any deal between BT and C&W would face tough regulatory hurdles in Hong Kong. It could also face difficulties in Germany, where the two companies have stakes in rival telecommunications groups.

BT is keen to expand outside the core UK operations which are increasingly squeezed by regulation and competition. The company's prices are at present capped at inflation minus 7.5 percentage points and are being reviewed now by Mr Cruickshank. The watchdog's proposals for new price controls are expected to culminate in a tougher cap to come into effect next year. BT must agree the changes decided by the regulator or the matter will be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Employment: Political uproar as utility lays off thousands of workers, but expansion plans bring some good news for Wales and Ulster

United Utilities ignites jobs row

MARY FAGAN

A political row erupted yesterday following news of 2,500 job losses at United Utilities, the company formed by North West Water's £1.8bn takeover of Norweb, the regional electricity firm. The lay-offs compare with 800 previously projected and will be largely in the core water and electricity operations.

Ian McCartney, shadow employment minister, attacked the planned cuts as "a slap in the face for thousands of hard-working employees". He added: "United Utilities is among the most profitable utilities in the country, and there is absolutely no need for these redundancies. Yet again the taxpayer is to be landed with a huge bill for unemployment benefit as employees are sacrificed to give a quick fix to the balance sheet."

Brian Staples, chief executive, said: "It's regrettable and we do not like it. But it is a fact of life in the industry today. The best people across both businesses will go forward with the group."

The job cuts in the core businesses emerged alongside plans to dispose of the group's retail, contracting and process equipment divisions, which employ about 4,000 in the UK and elsewhere. United also intends to pull out of power generation, an activity inherited from Norweb, which the new ownership feels is too small to be "meaningful".

United also hinted that it might seek further acquisitions in its drive to be a super-utility. The company said: "Ways are being explored of extending the group's utility activities into Europe whilst at the same time watching with interest the continued rationalisation in Europe."

The group said that the savings from the Norweb merger would be £140m a year by the end of the decade, about 40 per cent more than had been originally thought.

Earnings enhancement in 1996/97 will also exceed expectations and real dividend growth of 11 per cent per annum is "possible".

United will make a provision of £104m this year, largely to cover severance costs. Gearing at the end of the year will be 90 per cent, rising to 100 per cent next year but quickly falling back to between 75 and 80 per cent. The planned divestments, which the group said could take some time to achieve, could cull a further 10 per cent.

The move was broadly welcomed among City analysts. But some warned that United still faces the uncertainty of price control reviews at the end of the decade by two watchdogs, Ofwat and Offer. According to one analyst: "There is not much to get worked up about here except what appears to be a strategic decision to retrench into the core utility operations." The group's shares moved up 14p to 611p.

Separately, Calor Group yesterday warned of redundancies to come, and British Rail's engineering development unit announced job losses.

Calor, Britain's biggest supplier of bottled gas, warned more than 300 workers at its Slough headquarters, close to London, that there would be redundancies following a decision to close the office by next year. The move forms part of a plan to redistribute head office functions between existing regional offices and a new customer management centre to be established this year near Leamington Spa in Warwickshire.

The company refused to give further details ahead of a preliminary results announcement due this morning, but the business is known to be facing difficulties.

British Rail's engineering development unit is to close by the autumn with the loss of 58 jobs. BR had hoped to sell the Derby-based unit, which specialises in development of prototype rail vehicles.

Comment, page 25

Now Norweb pulls out of retailing

NIGEL COPE

The decision by United Utilities to sell Norweb's electrical retail interests makes it the latest in a long list of the privatised utilities to abandon the cut-throat market.

Eight electricity companies have now pulled the plug on their electrical stores in the last 12 months, as pressure to deliver value for shareholders forces tough decisions on peripheral activities. The Rumbelows chain also closed a year ago blaming mounting losses for the decision.

Only a handful of the regional electricity companies, including Seeboard, Northern and Scottish Hydro are still battling on. Only Scottish Power is still expanding aggressively. Most have been making substantial losses and have either sold or closed large parts of their operation.

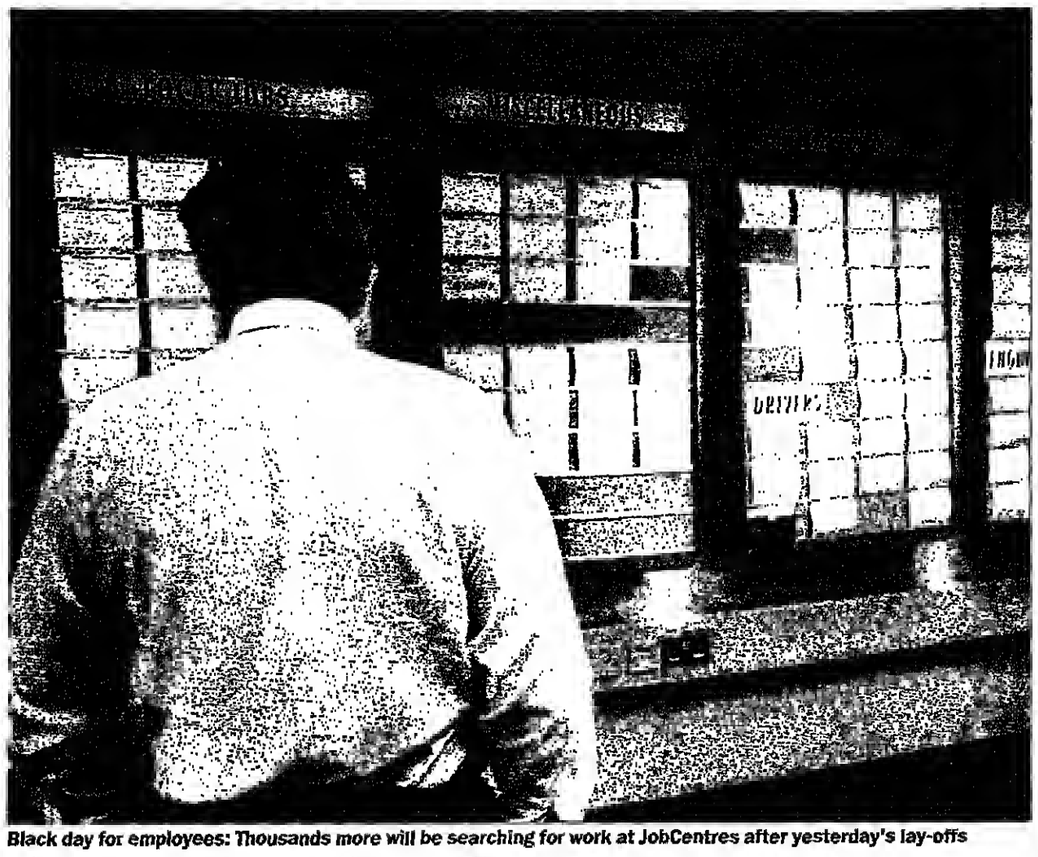
Norweb's electrical division is unusual in that it was making profits – £8m last year on sales of £207m. It has 90 high street stores and 67 out of town superstores. Most are in the North West though it has 18 superstores in the South West after it's purchase last year of some of Swalec's outlets.

The most likely candidate to buy the stores is the company's management led by Peter McTague, the group's retail director. He joined Norweb in 1992 and was previously a board director at Comet.

The electrical retail sector is rapidly consolidating into a few major players led by Dixons (which also owns Currys) and Comet, part of the Kingfisher group.

A year ago East Midlands Electricity and Yorkshire sold their Homepower joint venture. South West and web Manweb gave up the fight in April. In May the Powerhouse chain, which was jointly owned by Eastern, Midland and Southern, was put on the market.

Following Eastern's takeover by Hanson, some 200 of the outlets were sold to the management and another 200 were closed.



Black day for employees: Thousands more will be searching for work at JobCentres after yesterday's lay-offs

Bank of England axes offices

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Three hundred and fifty jobs were lost yesterday in the public services financial sector as the Bank of England and the National Statistics Office announced cost-saving exercises.

The Bank said it was closing four regional note-handling centres at a cost of 150 jobs over the next 12 to 18 months as part of a shake-up of its system for distributing banknotes.

Cash handling will cease at Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and Newcastle, and in future the issuing of bank notes and the disposal of old ones will only be handled at the Bank of England branches in London and Leeds. Offices will be maintained in these cities for monitoring economic trends and new ones will be opened in Cardiff and Nottingham, taking the total around the country to 12.

The newly formed Office for National Statistics said it would shed up to 200 jobs in the coming year as it merges staff at the Central Statistics Office and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Tim Holt, ONS chief executive said he wanted its statistics to be more user-friendly and readily available as well as preserving individual privacy. "I want official statistics to be more widely available and more widely used, not just by businesses and analysts but by ordinary people," he said.

A Bank of England spokesman said the move was being made because the high street banks had taken on much of the work in distributing banknotes previously. The Bank said it intended to eliminate costly duplication between its own arrangements for processing, storing and distributing banknotes and those of the commercial banks. This should save around £4m per year, but will be partly offset by the £1m per year costs of the regional agencies.

Alastair Darling, Labour's City spokesman, said it was essential that the Bank of England maintained its economic intelligence units in the English region as as well as in Wales, Scotland and northern Ireland.

"We want to broaden the basis on which the Bank of England formulates the advice that it gives to the Chancellor on interest rate policy," he said. "We propose to establish a Monetary Policy Board that will include members from the City and from industry in order to reflect views from different parts of the country."

Yesterday's winners and losers

Destruction	
United Utilities	1,700
Bank of England	150
Office for National Statistics	200
Calor*	n/a
British Rail	58
Creation	
Legal & General	400
Daewoo	330
YG-1	230

*300 warned of redundancies to come

Daewoo and L&G set to recruit

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Almost 1,000 jobs are being created in Wales and Northern Ireland after the insurance giant Legal & General and two South Korean companies yesterday unveiled expansion plans.

Legal & General said that it would recruit about 400 people over the next three years for a new sales and advice centre being set up in Cardiff. The company, which declined to reveal how much it was investing, had considered sites in North-east England and Surrey.

The decision was welcomed by the Welsh Development Agency as an "important milestone" in achieving their target of creating 10,000 new jobs in finance and commerce.

More than 560 new jobs are on their way to Northern Ireland following investments of more than £23m by South Korean companies Daewoo and the YG-1 Tool Company.

Daewoo is creating 330 jobs by the end of the year in a £14.8m expansion, with Government-backing, of video recorders and deck mechanisms production at its plant in Antrim.

The expansion was announced by Northern Ireland Economy Minister, Baroness Denton, during a visit to the company headquarters in South Korea. She said it was "an extremely important" investment because it reduced the Antrim plant's dependence on components from Korea.

The company, which set up in Northern Ireland in 1989, expects to employ 1,000 by December.

KH Nam, vice-president of Daewoo, said the Northern Ireland facility was one of the group's main overseas investments. "We see the Antrim plant at the forefront of our strategy to treble our VCR market share in Europe and to expand sales into the Russian republics."

Meanwhile, another 230 jobs are being created by YG-1 at an £8.5m plant to manufacture precision cutting tools in west Belfast.

CableTel buys NTL broadcast network for £235m

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

International CableTel, Britain's third largest cable operator, is paying £235m for NTL, the leading commercial broadcast services provider, as a step toward creating a truly national telecommunications network.

The move will bring together NTL's national transmission operations and CableTel's local fibre-optic cables, which provide 57,000 homes with cable TV and telephony. The result will be end-to-end broad-band connections, allowing high-speed links carrying voice, data and video. CableTel will be able to use the NTL transmission network to bypass BT and the other national telecoms operators. NTL recently won a national licence to provide fixed radio telecommunications, which will accelerate CableTel's creation of a national network.

"This creates a unique national telecoms competitor," Barry Knapp, chief executive of CableTel, said.

He added that the company intends to make the network available to other cable operators, which have been seeking ways of avoiding the charges made for the use of networks operated by BT, Mercury and Energis.

NTL, which supplies transmission services to ITV, Channel 4 and independent radio stations through a network of 600 masts and microwave links, was sold off by the Government when it disbanded the old Independent Broadcasting Authority in 1991. An investment group led by a division of Mercury Asset Management bought the operations for £70m.

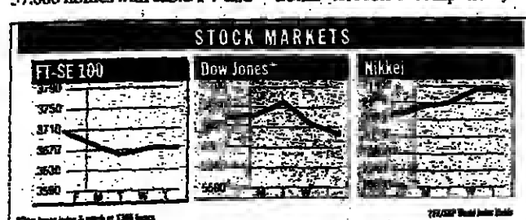
In addition to £200m in cash, financed through bank loans, CableTel will pay NTL shareholders, which include its employees, another £35m in a year's time.

The shareholders of NTL will have seen a 235 per cent return on their investment in just five years. The deal is likely to fuel renewed criticism over the privatisation of Government-owned assets at fire-sale prices, and could lead to a sharply higher valuation for the BBC's transmission services, which have been earmarked for sale, perhaps by the end of the year.

Jeff Hoon, Labour spokesman on information technology and telecommunications, said last night: "This just demonstrates the concerns we had at the time of privatisation. If [the BBC sale] goes ahead, we must ensure that a proper price is paid."

Last year, NTL had revenues of £109m, and pre-tax profits before extraordinary items of about £37m. It has been a big capital spender, in order to finance development of its broadcast and telecoms contracts, which include satellite as well as radio transmission. It recently won the right to provide transmission services for Channel 5, the terrestrial service scheduled for launch in early 1997.

STOCK MARKETS

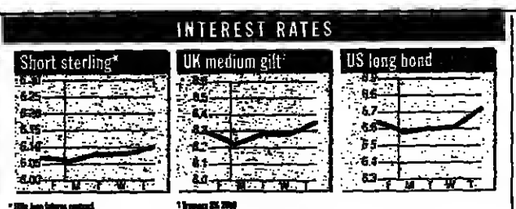


Indices

Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	3672.60	+0.20	+0.0	3781.30	2954.20	4.04
FTSE 250	4309.40	+3.70	+0.1	4309.40	3300.90	3.43
FTSE 350	1851.60	+0.50	+0.0	1889.00	1482.40	3.90
FT Small Cap	2091.00	+0.66	+0.0	2091.00	1678.61	3.07
FT All Share	1831.96	+0.45	+0.0	1864.59	1469.23	3.84
New York *	5606.29	-20.59	-0.4	5683.60	3832.08	2.13
Tokyo	21295.82	-34.16	-0.2	21329.98	14485.40	0.74†
Hong Kong	11030.58	-35.99	-0.3	11194.48	6967.93	3.35†
Frankfurt	2508.44	-16.98	-0.7	2525.42	1910.96	1.92†

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates

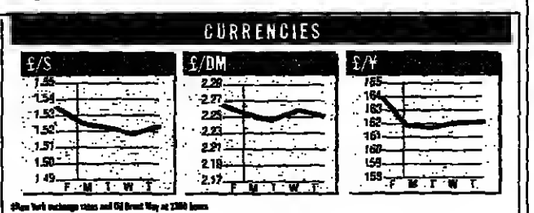
Index	1 Month	1 Year
UK	6.03	6.38
US	5.38	5.75
Japan	0.56	0.88
Germany	3.31	3.38

Bond Yields *

Medium Bond (%)	Year Ago	Long Bond	(%) Year Ago
7.56	8.43	8.22	8.45
6.39	7.17	6.70	7.42
1.86	3.11	-	-
6.46	7.18	7.21	-

*Benchmark indices

CURRENCIES



Pound

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
$ (London)	1.5233	+0.49c	1.5967
$ (N York)‡	1.5240	+0.60c	1.6040
DM (London)	2.2515	-0.71pf	2.2525
¥ (London)	162.112	+0.043	143.025
£ Index	83.3	-0.1	85.6

Dollar

	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
£ (London)	0.6565	-0.21	0.6262
£ (N York)‡	0.6562	-0.26	0.6234
DM (London)	1.4781	-0.94pf	1.4107
¥ (London)	106.425	-Y0.315	89.575
$ Index	95.8	-0.3	90.9

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Change (p)	Change%	Falls	Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change
Rio Mining	585	39	7.1	Devro Intl	231	14	5.7
Cable & Wireless	511.5	34	7.1	Salvesen Christian	259	8	3.0
Refuge Group	510	24	4.9	Sedgwick Group	131	4	3.0

OTHER INDICATORS

	Yesterday	Day's chg	Year Ago
Oil Brent $	18.16	-0.53	17.48
Gold $	398.30	-1.8	383.40
Gold £	261.47	-2.71	240.12

	Index	Latest	Yr Ago	Next Figs
RPI	150.9	+2.7pc	146.9	18 Apr
GDP	107.0	+2.0pc	106.1	29 Apr
Base Rates	—	6.00pc	6.75	—

Redland to create European tile giant

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Redland yesterday announced plans for a radical overhaul of its building materials operations that will create Europe's largest roof tiles manufacturer with sales of DM3bn (£1.33bn). Details of the deal, which will involve a merger of its own interests with those of its successful German subsidiary, Braas, are likely to be unveiled within the next few weeks.

Robert Napier, chief executive, also said negotiations were at an advanced stage with four potential buyers of its UK bricks arm. In addition, discussions are in train to sell Redland's US brick operations, which will complete a reversal of the company's expansion in bricks early in the 1990s when it bought rival Steetley. Mr Napier admits now that Redland overpaid for that deal.

The ambitious deal with Braas comes as that company's core German activities face a rapid slowdown in construction activity. The underlying weakening in trading has been exacerbated in the early months of 1996 by poor weather across Europe, and Redland warned that first-half profits will not match those achieved in 1995.

Although Braas has given Redland exposure to the recent post-unification building surge in Germany, recession is taking its toll and Redland believes now is the right time to simplify the relationship between the two companies and reduce duplication of investment.

The shape of the proposed deal is still uncertain, but it is understood that Redland will inject its tile businesses, based in the UK, France, Spain and the Low Countries, into Braas, which focuses further east, in exchange for a mixture of cash and Braas shares.

Currently Redland owns 50.8 per cent of Braas and it is thought that the German company's minority shareholders are prepared to see that stake rise to about 60 per cent. A newly named company will be created, probably headed by a Braas-nominated chairman and with a board of directors taken from both Braas and Redland.

News of the restructuring accompanied full-year figures which underlined the difficult trading conditions facing Redland last year. Pre-tax profits before exceptional items fell 5 per cent to £355.1m (£373m), which Mr Napier said represented a strong management performance in the face of volume falls in most of its markets of up to 10 per cent. Price rises in line with inflation were pushed through and cost-cutting largely offset the volume-induced margin fall.

The reported profit figure of £273.2m was hit further by an £81.9m exceptional charge, mainly made up of book value write-offs at Genstar, Redland's aggregates operation in Maryland. A maintained final dividend of 11.2p, following the interim reduction, resulted in a full year total of 16.7p (19.4p).

In the UK, where Mr Napier said "the phones stopped ringing last March", volumes of sand, gravel, dry stone and ready mixed concrete all fell by more than 10 per cent. Higher prices offset much of the damage but the weaker housing market also hit brick demand, leading to a fall in UK profits from £41m to £35.2m.

Germany, the dominant profit contributor, saw an 11 per cent fall in DM profits, although currency movements limited the fall to £3.6m, down to £191m.

There may be more grey hairs, but 14 years after the collapse of his original Sky Train, Sir Freddie Laker's smile says it all: We're back in business.

Nothing could take the shine off the launch of his new transatlantic air service yesterday. Not even having to rent an aircraft for the occasion, after his own failed to arrive on time. A cockpit windscreen cracked – possibly from a bird strike – during a test flight of his own aircraft, delaying its entry into service.

The first route, Manchester to Orlando, started yesterday and Sir Freddie (above) was on hand with desk staffer Susan Turner to welcome passengers on board. Departures from London Gatwick are scheduled to start today.

The new Laker Airways service is aimed at the booming Florida family holidays market, with fares pitched at a highly competitive £299 round-trip. The original Laker Sky Train foundered in 1982 in the face of fierce competition and cut-throat fares.

Carey steps down at Slough

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Roger Carey is leaving Slough Estates, Britain's largest industrial landlord, after a boardroom reshuffle in effect eliminated his job as managing director. The former president of the British Property Federation and one of the property industry's highest-profile figures, will leave the company at the end of April.

Mr Carey's departure follows the decision by Sir Nigel Mobbs to split the roles of chairman and chief executive. His move to become executive chairman created a race for the chief executive's job, which was won by the finance director, Derek Wilson.

Both sides insisted that the parting of the ways was amicable and Mr Carey is not expected to receive any compensation. He plans to keep working in the property business but has no concrete plans.

News of the boardroom changes, which bring Slough into line with Cadbury committee recommendations, accompanied full-year figures showing an 11 per cent rise in profit before tax to £70.7m. The more important measure of net asset value per share declined during the year, however, by 3.6 per cent to 266p.

Sounding a more optimistic note than for some time, Sir Nigel said: "The past year has seen further progress in the achievement of strategic objectives, particularly the continuing improvement in occupancy." As a result the dividend was nudged up 4.9 per cent to 8.5p a share.

Slough's total portfolio was valued at £1.78bn at the end of 1995, a 3.1 per cent decline on a year earlier. The biggest hit was in the UK, where values fell almost 5 per cent, led by a 7.3 per cent fall in the value of Slough's offices. Retail properties fell by 5.6 per cent while the core industrial estate, which accounts for 58 per cent of the total portfolio, slipped by 3.9 per cent. The UK portfolio is currently rented at levels estimated to be 7.8 per cent higher than those that would be achievable on the open market. That represents a slight improvement on the over-renting of 8.5 per cent at the end of 1994.

Queens Moat struggles to profit

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Queens Moat Houses, the hugely-indebted hotel group, continues to struggle towards recovery, returning to the black last year for the first time since 1990. But Stanley Metcalfe, chairman, presented a decidedly cautious view of the future as he announced the results yesterday.

"At this early stage in the current year, I can report that trading has been satisfactory," he said. Economic growth was a major factor in the company's revenue growth, and while he was "cautiously optimistic about the trading environment for the UK in 1996," prospects for growth in Germany and France were not good, particularly against a background of intense competition.

Pre-tax profits of £42.4m in the year to December replaced a deficit of £95.2m last time, but the group still faces a mountain of debt and would have been in loss but for £48.8m of interest waived under last year's £1.3bn capital restructuring. Borrowings stood at £1.02bn at the end of December, down from £1.28bn the previous year.

The group made another small inroad into that yesterday when it was announced that Stakis, the Scottish hotels and casinos group had paid £3.4m for the Europa, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The hotel, to be known as the Stakis Tyneside in future, brings to three the number of Queens Moat's County hotels sold since the beginning of the year, following the disposal of eight in 1995.

Improved trading: Andrew Coppel, chief executive

These country-house hotels are deemed not to fit into the group's core Moat House brand, situated on main arterial routes within or on the edge of towns, and a further 27 have been earmarked for sale in the future.

The news left the shares unchanged at 22p yesterday – although they have soared since being re-listed at 3p last May after being suspended for more than two years.

Mr Metcalfe said that the further improvement in the group's trading performance anticipated at the half year results in September was evident in the full year figures. Operating profits rose from £35.2m to £44.7m. After adjusting for the effects of the restructuring – principally higher operating rentals – the underlying increase was 54 per cent.

Andrew Coppel, chief executive, said trading conditions had continued to improve in the UK, although there was stronger activity in the south of England than in the north.

Occupancy rates improved 4.7 percentage points to 66.8 per cent, still some way short of the market average of 71 or 72 per cent, but average room rates grew £1.29 to £42.29. That meant the rise in the yield – occupancy multiplied by average room rate – was ahead of the market, Mr Coppel said. In the Moat House division, yields were nearly 12 per cent up, but still below market levels.

The figures were boosted by a £25.1m profit on asset sales and £3.4m taken to the profit and loss account from the revaluation of the group's hotels.

This review, which was carried out by Jones Lang Wootton, showed the properties had fallen to £891m at the year end, but stripping out disposals made in 1994, the portfolio increased from £838m.

Booker plays down talk of imminent Nurdin bid

NIGEL COPE

Booker, the food-processing and cash-and-carry group, yesterday played down speculation that it was set to bid for Nurdin & Peacock, the rival cash-and-carry operator.

Reporting an 11 per cent rise in profits to £100m, Booker's chief executive, Charles Bowen, said: "Internal growth is our priority. The cash and food service division is growing very well and there are further efficiencies to be made."

Shares in Nurdin have been rising recently on rumours that Booker was set to strike. The situation is complicated by a large stake owned by the Peacock family as well as a 14 per cent stake controlled by the Dutch group, SHV Makro, which is also thought keen to increase its holding.

Analysts believe a Booker-Nurdin deal would make strategic sense, enabling Booker to reduce costs and close stores that overlapped. A bid at around 197p would value the company at £250m. Booker shares closed 13p higher at 395p. Nurdin's shares edged 4p higher at 172p.

Mr Bowen was sanguine about the possibility of Makro making a bid instead, which would leave Booker with a far larger competitor. "We are gaining market share from all our competitors. Even if SHV bought Nurdin we would be confident going up against it," he added.

Booker is the largest cash-and-carry operator in the UK, with 160 sites. It has outlets in Portugal and seeks to expand in other European markets and the Far East. Nurdin is smaller and has been changing its stores into the TBW format.

Booker's figures for the year to December were at the top end of City expectations. Profits of £100m were struck on turnover 14 per cent higher at £4.2bn. The group's salmon operations performed strongly, boosted by a 20 per cent rise in salmon consumption. Booker has maintained its market share despite some fish-dumping by Norwegian producers. Along with some Scottish producers Booker is seeking action from both the UK government and the EU. The fish and prepared-foods business could be a candidate for disposal after a difficult year.

Raw material prices have been rising and proved difficult to pass on to supermarkets. The company is therefore trying to cut costs. Cost control enabled Booker to improve margins last year and the company said it planned to repeat the performance this time.

Blue Circle builds on upturn

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

There is no doubt Blue Circle has an excellent cement business and it is currently benefiting from some pretty buoyant construction markets around the world.

Even in the depressed UK, its command of half the market means it can maintain the industry's prices at a level which keeps out imports and yet still makes enviable margins of over 20 per cent.

Despite a 3 per cent dip in volumes, UK cement profits rose an impressive 1.9 per cent to £65.3m last year. What Blue Circle can do when markets really take off was illustrated by last year's performance overseas. Buoyant demand in the US, Chile and Malaysia saw profit rises ranging between 29 per cent and 37 per cent in those regions.

The benefits of this general upturn in the cycle shone through in group profits, which leapt from £184m to £264m in the year to December, despite being complicated by exceptionals. The 1994 charge of £59.4m – mostly the loss on the sale of the New World cookers business – was cut to £9m in 1995.

While Blue Circle has shown it can manage the core business, its diversification strategy has been disastrous. Fresh from sorting out the Armitage Shanks bathrooms division, it is now having to tackle the bigger problems of its boilers-to-radiators heating offshoot, including Myson and Potterton in the UK. A restructuring announced last month is meant to deliver cost savings of £25m by next year, but that will still leave returns well short of the targeted 15 per cent return on £550m of capital employed in heating, after profits collapsed from £42.4m to £17.1m in 1995.

The cement cycle would appear to have a little more steam left in it. UK cement volumes have yet to show any recovery from the 10 per cent fall registered in the second half of last year, but there is good reason to agree with Blue Circle that the market will pick up later this year.

Construction orders up 20 per cent in the three months to January and recent plans by housebuilders to significantly raise output must feed through to cement demand eventually. Add to that price rises of over 4 per cent to be posted next month and there should be some growth this year.

Overseas, the US could now hit a plateau, but any decline from here is likely to be gentle. More questionable is whether last year's boom in Chile and the Far East can be maintained without attracting competition or being killed off by the onset of extra capacity. Blue Circle plans to use its minimal gearing and formidable cash flow for acquisitions. Given the record, that should worry investors.

At 333p, up 10p, the shares are fairly rated on a forward price/earnings ratio of 14, assuming profits just short of £300m this year.

Next still offers rich rewards

Next's market-beating record has become so predictable that even David Jones, the retailer's chief executive, seems to be having difficulty in finding his own results interesting. What was once the high street's great recovery story has become a tale of consistent growth that puts the rest of the sector in the shade. Pre-exceptional profits were up 25 per cent to £125m with high street stores and the Next Directory putting in sterling performances. Disposals boosted the pre-tax figure to £142m.

After shaving the margin to boost sales over the last two years Next is keeping the return on sales constant on like-for-like turnover that is still increasing at a heady 12 per cent since the year-end. Quite how Next is managing such increases when other retailers are struggling is not entirely clear, but the market is not arguing. Profits from the 304 stores shot up from £59m to £74.7m, while Next Directory managed a 25 per cent improvement to £19.1m.

Having pulled out of its Bath And Body Works joint venture, which had opened five Body Shop-style toiletries stores, Next is focused on those two businesses. After notching up a loss of £1m, the sale of the stake to its partner, The Limited, makes sense, as does the decision not to add to its five US stores, where one will close. More franchise openings are scheduled, however, in the Middle East, the Far East and Greece.

Even this spending will not much dent the growing cash pile, which rose £50m to £170m. The company has raised the dividend by 30 per cent and prefers an aggressive dividend policy rather than a special dividend or share buy-back.

It is testing a personal loan scheme to its Directory customers which is utilising £10m of cash. If rolled out it might use up £50m, but that would still leave a chunky war chest. All this hints at acquisitions and Lord Wolfson, chairman, admits that he likes to have the ammunition available if an opportunity came along but has no current plans. Next shares have proved a phenomenal investment over the last five years. While the FT all-share index has risen 84 per cent since 1991, Next's shares have grown 38-fold. BZW has raised its forecast from £138m to £150m for the current year. With the shares up another 15.5p to 494.5p yesterday, they are on a forward rating of 18. High, but rightly so with growth set to continue.

Gloom all round for Redland

Just when it looked as if Redland was recovering from the calamitous fall in its share price since the start of 1994, it is heading south again. Yesterday, the shares slipped another 8p to 384p as the market focused on a gloomy assessment of trading in pretty much all of its markets.

That was a slightly uncharitable assessment of the 5 per cent fall in pre-tax profits last year – before asset write-downs – which represented quite a creditable management performance in the face of volume declines of between 6 and 10 per cent. The pressure to cut costs will only intensify this year, however, with trading unlikely to improve until at least the back end of 1996.

Germany is the big problem, with residential building permits slumping in the West by 28 per cent during the second half of the year, more than offsetting a 20 per cent rise in the East. Both areas experienced a progressive deterioration during the year, which augurs badly for the current year since tile volumes tend to lag permits by between six and nine months.

No surprise then that the company is planning a radical overhaul of its European roof-tile businesses, merging its own operations with those of Braas, its 50.8 per cent-owned subsidiary. Unfortunately for investors, the scale of any savings remains a mystery until the company finalises negotiations with Braas's minority shareholders.

Still, at least the company is at last making decisions based on commercial rather than financial imperatives, which is more reassuring than the treasury manoeuvres of yesteryear. Getting out of bricks appears to make sense, even if it is quite a U-turn after the ill-conceived Steetley acquisition.

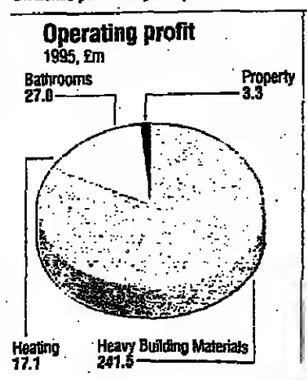
With first-half profits unlikely to match 1995's, full-year forecasts are being pulled back to about £330m. That puts the shares on a prospective price/earnings ratio of 13. Supported by a 5.4 per cent dividend yield, they look reasonably secure but unexciting.

Blue Circle Industries: at a glance

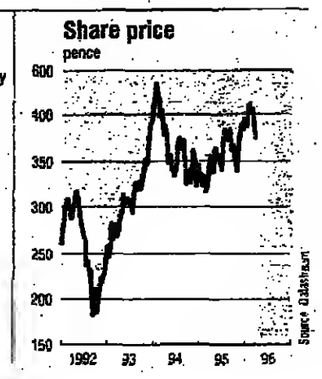
Market value: £2.63bn, share price 333p

Trading record	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Turnover (£bn)	1.15	1.37	1.68	1.78	1.77
Pre-tax profits (£m)	98.6	93.8	186	184	264
Earnings per share (pence)	8.6	4.0	14.5	12.7	18.4
Dividends per share (pence)	10.9	11.25	11.25	11.75	12.5

Operating profit
1995, £m



Share price
pence



Hugs, kisses, goats and eruptions, but no spam

CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK

As you tuck into your prawn cocktail sandwich this lunchtime, the "Most Innovative Sandwich of the Year Award" will be being judged at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London. This is the fifth year of the awards, which are sponsored by the British Sandwich Association, the representative of a £3bn-and-growing industry. Among the tasty morsels on offer: "Hugs & Kisses, made with peaches and passionfruit on chocolate bread, with a single Rolo chocolate; Vesuvius (an eruption of flavour!) made with focaccia bread and gorgonzola cheese, with a filling of goat's cheese, spinach and tomato sauce; and the Enrosandwich, a concoction of German (Bockwurst sausage and German mustard), Greek (houmous, olives and avocado) and French (rillettes du Mains and mêlée of salad leaves)." More than 320 people will attend a dinner tonight hosted by comedian Tom O'Connor at which this and other sandwich-related awards will be made. Easy on the mayo.

The Lancashire weaving village of Calder Vale, just north of Preston, is home to a 77-year old company whose entire production consists of the red and white cotton bead shawls worn only in Saudi Arabia. Yesterday the company, Lappet Manufacturing, was sold by Courtaulds Textiles to a group of anonymous Middle Eastern investors for £17m. Bob Quick, Lappet's chief executive, commented: "Courtaulds bought us in 1968 and have now decided that we are a non-core business. Making the shawls involves quite a specialised, old-fashioned method. Our business has grown with the Saudi economy." A nice position to be in, I'm sure.

Since being a basket case five years ago Next has become a rip-roaring success story with remorseless growth in profits. The chain store group's chief executive, David Jones, who possesses all the charisma to be expected from a chartered accountant, told a charming story yesterday at the results press briefing. His young daughter had asked him the night before what he would be saying the next day, and he duly referred to ballooning profits, soaring sales and the like. "Same boring stuff then, Daddy," she commented. Out of the mouths of babes...

BZW has pinched a four-man equity derivatives team from HSBC Midland to cover the UK life insurance sector in structured products for the retail market. Led by Giles Rothwell, aged a mere 33, the team comprises Desmond Byrne, Paul Coleman and Richard Ager – who's only 28. Shouldn't these people still be in school? Elsewhere in the Barclays empire yesterday, BZW Barclays Global Investors, the world's largest manager of tracker funds, lured Kevin McNulty from Prudential Portfolio Managers to be its first securities lending manager.

Mr McNulty will have plenty to lend – the company has £154bn in assets under management.

Cat-owners can now take out cover for their beloved kitty under the new "Paxman Plan" from Pet Plan, the pet health insurance company. As its name suggests, the plan is a response to comments on cats by Jeremy Paxman, the noted TV broadcaster, in the *Evening Standard* on Tuesday: "I hate them," the paper reported. "I want to organise a meet on Shepherd's Bush Green every Saturday. We'll blow horns, wear bright blue anoraks and race all over west London. Then we'll tear them limb from limb." Cripes. Anyhow, for an extra £1 on the premium, Pet Plan's Paxman cover will pay out should the TV man slaughter your cat.

All aboard for the mother of all takeovers

COMMENT

'BT's Sir Iain Vallance is just desperate to do this deal. At one stroke it gives BT the scale in international markets it needs as well as filling an obvious hole in its international spread – the Far East'

Stock market rumours as strong as those swirling around Cable & Wireless yesterday usually turn out to be true. Notwithstanding persistent denials of talks with BT over the past two weeks, C&W was last night forced to confirm that the market was indeed right all along. Talks over the mother of all takeovers are underway, and, by all accounts, quite near to fruition.

This is a deal that makes eminent sense for both BT and C & W. Plainly there are very substantial regulatory barriers, but none of them are insurmountable in the case of an agreed deal with ministerial backing. Mercury must be sold, or it will make a nonsense of a decade of attempts to increase competition in the UK domestic market. But there are bound to be willing buyers, including, probably, AT&T, whose presence would step up, not undermine, competition. The chief obstacle is not in any case the regulators, but the power vacuum at the top of C&W. The chairman is new to the job and the chief executive only a caretaker. Perhaps understandably, neither is inclined to take responsibility for such a fundamental decision.

BT's Sir Iain Vallance is just desperate to do this deal. At a stroke it gives BT the scale in international markets it needs as well as filling an obvious hole in its international spread – the Far East. With luck, it should also revive BT's flagging share price by giving the company new impetus outside the UK's regulatory yoke.

The terms talked of in the stock market yesterday – three BT shares and 60p in cash for every C&W share – could easily be made to add up to 600p a share if the market takes a shine to the deal. That in turn would allow C&W to agree the takeover with honour.

Valdes leaves the British unimpressed

It was hard for British investors to know whether to laugh or cry yesterday at an attempt by Charles Valdes of Calpers, the $100bn California pension fund, to ginger up British corporate governance.

After the Cadbury and Greenbury reports, not to speak of the Hampel Committee, which is just starting its work, Mr Valdes seems to have descended from another planet. Or as one big institution preferred to put it, "Has this guy been in a submarine for three years?"

Nobody would pretend that corporate governance in the UK is anywhere near perfect. Governance fatigue, as the CBI puts it, has more to do with the amount of verbiage expended on it in the last five years than with actual results.

In that respect, at least, Britain must now be the most active exponent of corporate governance in the world.

Mr Valdes is head of investment at Calpers, a celebrated pioneer of the use of shareholder pressure against underperforming companies, and publisher of a blacklist of those at the bottom of the class.

Mr Valdes said stock prices of companies targeted by Calpers trailed the index by 75 per cent in the previous five years, and outperformed in the subsequent five years by 54 per cent, an annual return of $150m for the effort.

Calpers has more money abroad – $20bn by the end of next year – than any other US pension fund, mainly in Japan, the UK, France and Germany. So it is extending its corporate governance policies overseas, and that includes us.

After careful study Mr Valdes has thankfully come to the conclusion that policy should be tailored separately to the customs of each of these markets. But it is hard to believe that Mr Valdes is yet in touch with what is happening in the UK.

He wants UK institutions to set up a corporate governance body to improve underperforming companies. This is is unlikely to impress the investment committees of the National Association of Pension Funds and the Association of British Insurers, which between them cover half of UK equities. They have been in the thick of Cadbury and Greenbury for five years.

Mr Valdes' specially tailored proposal for the UK is that a set of corporate governance principles should be developed here, including "a statement that all UK corporations should adhere to the Cadbury and Greenbury code of best practices." Since the Stock Exchange yellow book already incorporate chunks of both, this sounded quaintly out of touch to his listeners at a London conference.

UK institutions have a deep dislike of public action against companies, so it is often hard to tell whether their role is all they crack it up to be. But substantial numbers have for years done behind the scenes exactly what Calpers does so very publicly.

The UK can certainly improve its methods in this area, but it is not clear from yesterday's contribution that Calpers' advice is what it needs.

A lot of splashing at United Utilities

Since when did the announcement of 2,500 job losses become an occasion for cheer-leading self-congratulation? Since North West Water took over its contiguous electricity distribution company, Norweb, seems to be the answer.

Yes – proclaims Sir Desmond Pitcher, chairman of the merged company, now grandly renamed United Utilities – the scope for job losses and cost cuts is even greater than we had anticipated. Another 1,700 jobs are to go on top of the 800 already planned.

Needless to say, the glee with which Sir Desmond delivered this message was not aimed at United's hapless workforce, but at the City, where there is still some scepticism about the supposed benefits of this merger. All you sceptics are going to be proved wrong, was his breathless message. By the turn of the century, earnings enhancement will be a whopping £140m per annum, 40 per cent higher than foreseen when the acquisition of Norweb was being planned. And as a consequence, we can now commit to 11 per cent real dividend growth, Sir Desmond says. On the face of it, impressive stuff. But let's have a look at the figures again. Once the tax and interest charge benefit is stripped out of the £140m, operating savings are only £95m. Furthermore, the takeover involved huge amounts of new equity so earnings per share enhancement is at best only 12 per cent, a bonus the regulator will almost certainly gobble up at the time of the next price review, if not before. You have to wonder whether it's all worth the management effort.

In Sir Desmond's mind there's no doubt about it. If the City lets him, there will be another utility acquisition before too long. There is one heartening aspect to all this empire-building, however – a strategic backdown from non-core businesses. Out goes retailing, contracting, process equipment and generation. Instead, the company is to focus entirely on being a utility service provider. An even narrower focus, on water, might ultimately have served shareholders better.

Jacques Vert chief resigns as group dives into red

NIGEL COPE

Jacques Vert, the troubled upmarket women's wear group, announced the departure of its chief executive yesterday alongside its second profits warning of the year and the withdrawal of the dividend payment.

The retailer and wholesaler, which specialises in "occasionwear" for weddings and parties, said it would make "a substantial loss" in its current year instead of the break-even City analysts were expecting. The shares, trading at more than 200p six months ago, lost 38 per cent of their value yesterday to close at 77p.

David Tiedeman, chief executive, is leaving the company after only a year in the job.

He was on a two-year contract and is thought to be in line for compensation of up to £220,000.

Though most of his share options are worthless due to the collapse in the company's share price, he does have 55,000 options granted at 44p.

He will be replaced by Bill Reid who is to become executive chairman. Brian Heilbron, commercial director, will move up to chief operating officer.

The company blamed the warning on a string of problems, many of which have been dogging the group for the past year. The hot summer last year affected sales of the group's more formal clothing.

It has also experienced production difficulties at its factory in the North-east and blamed tough trading on the high street and supplier delivery problems.

Since January the late delivery of cloth and other raw materials has delayed the production of garments which meant customer orders could not be satisfied.

A new computer system, due to have been fully installed by December has been dogged by teething problems, affecting distribution and service to wholesale customers.

Jacques Vert has been unable to deliver complete product ranges to customers either through its own stores or the concessions it operates in department stores.

The company said like-for-like sales were lower than last year which would mean a substantial loss for the year ending 27 April.

The company has decided not to pay a final dividend and to withdraw the previously announced interim payout of 2.25p per shares.

It is also in discussions with its bankers about extending its facilities which only run until September. Though it is within its borrowing limits, bank debts have risen above previously forecast levels.

The company is now planning to cut costs and borrowings. "Unprofitable retail units will be reviewed and closed if necessary where it is not anticipated that a satisfactory performance can be restored," the company said.

Jacques Vert was founded by Jack Cynamon and Alan Green. Both have stepped back from the day-to-day running of the company in the last two years and the handover has not proved a happy one.

Only six months ago the shares stood at 201p and the City was looking to re-rate the company as more of a retailer than a rag trade fashion group.

Last November it announced plans to open 50 concessions within House of Fraser's department stores to boost sales.

Change of style: David Tiedeman (left), chief executive, is to leave Jacques Vert after only a year in office. Alan Green (right), a co-founder of the company, stepped back from the day-to-day running of Jacques Vert a year ago

National Express close to Gatwick rail victory

RUSSELL HOTTEN

National Express, the coach company, is close to victory in the controversial battle to take over the Gatwick Express rail franchise after the company was yesterday confirmed as the preferred bidder.

The Office of Passenger Rail Franchising named National Express ahead of rival bids from Richard Branson's Virgin and a management buyout team that had joined forces with British Airways.

National Express was also chosen yesterday as Opraf's first choice to buy the Midland Main Line rail franchise. Roger Salmon, the rail franchising director, said both bids raised competition issues and he has passed on details to the Office of Fair Trading to investigate.

Gatwick Express operates a non-stop service between London's Victoria station and Gatwick airport. Midland Main Line operates Inter-City passenger services, principally between the East Midlands, South Yorkshire and London's St Pancras.

Bidding for Gatwick Express has been dogged by concern in the City about leaks, and doubts over whether a single company should also be awarded the Midland Main Line franchise.

The OFT is expected to be more concerned with Midland Main Line, as National Express runs coach services to destinations served on the rail route. The OFT did not hold an inquiry into the purchase by bus company Stagecoach of South West Trains because there was little overlap.

National Express said it was confident that ownership of the franchises would not go against the public interest. The company said: "The main competitor to rail services is the private car, not National Express coach services. The overlap between the markets served by NE coach services and these train sevices is very small."

The company's shares rose 16p to 502p as analysts said National Express should do well from the diversification into rail.

Brian Wilson, the Labour Party's transport spokesman, said: "The inevitable outcome of handing train services over to bus companies is that they will substitute buses for trains whenever they find it advantageous to do so, without regard to passenger choice."

"Both Gatwick Express and Midland Main Line have enjoyed substantial public investment and are guaranteed money-makers. We are now seeing the country being carved up into local transport monopolies without regard for the public interest."

Industry View, page 27

US fund wins few backers in City

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

A wave of cynicism yesterday greeted calls by the largest public pension fund in the US for more aggressive shareholder activism in Britain.

Calpers, the Californian pension fund that controls nearly $100bn of pension funds, said it wanted to bring its assertive style to underperforming management in Britain.

But the suggestions were described as "extraordinary propositions" by leading UK fund managers.

The California Public Employees Retirement Fund, which has earmarked about £2bn for the UK and European markets, has made a name for itself in the US with its high-profile exposure of underperforming management.

Speaking yesterday in London, Charles Valdes, chairman of Calpers' investment committee, said the time was right for it to become engaged in countries such as the UK.

He spoke of the so-called Calpers effect, whereby publicity about poor management, including a blacklist of companies, had led to a marked turnaround in performance.

Having decided to allocate some 20 per cent of Calpers' $100bn (£66bn) portfolio to overseas investment, including a significant proportion in the UK market, Mr Valdes said the group wanted to become more engaged in corporate governance in these countries.

But leading British fund managers expressed doubts about what his proposals meant in practice.

"The UK probably has one of the best developed processes of corporate governance in the world. It is hard to understand exactly what Calpers can bring to this party apart from headline-grabbing," a top investment manager said.

Mr Valdes said: "Our motto will be to work co-operatively and to work collaboratively, not confrontationally ... the first element is the development of corporate governance principles for each market."

IN BRIEF

• **Thorn EMI** is to put off its demerger by three weeks following its failure to win clearance from regulators on the timing of its first quarter results in 1996/7, the company said yesterday. The date is now set as 19 August, to allow the company time to inform shareholders of the results and to proceed with the introduction of new share incentive schemes for management. The company also said the total cost of the demerger would be £75m rather than £100m as originally estimated and that formal clearances had been received from UK tax authorities regarding the proposed demerger. US clearances have been delayed.

• **Gehe nf Germany's** £650m all-cash bid for Lloyds Chemists was yesterday referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission by the President of the Board of Trade, Ian Lang. The reference was expected in the wake of last week's decision by the European Commission to pass the case back to the UK authorities. The MMC is already looking at the rival bid from UniChem.

• **Sales at William Morrisnn**, the Yorkshire-based supermarket group, passed £2bn for the first time last year although the companywarned that margins were becoming tighter. New openings pushed group turnover 18 per cent higher to £2.1bn. Pre-tax profits were 10 per cent ahead at £127m.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
William Baird (F)	671m (534m)	10.3m (26.1m)	5.4p (14.8p)	9.35p (9.35p)
Blue Circle (F)	1.77bn (1.78bn)	267m (184m)	21.4p (21.1p)	12.5p (11.75p)
Booker (F)	4.22bn (3.70bn)	82.8m (69.8m)	22.8p (21.2p)	23.1p (22.4p)
Grassby (F)	92.6m (94.3m)	6.00m (10.1m)	5.9p (11.8p)	5.6p (6.6p)
Johnston Group (F)	138m (123m)	6.6m (5.4m)	38.73p (31.7p)	11p (10p)
Wm Morrison (F)	2.10bn (1.78bn)	127m (116m)	10.67p (9.91p)	1.4p (1.2p)
Next (F)	774m (653m)	142m (107m)	28.2p (21.8p)	11.75p (9p)
Queens Moat Houses (F)	452m (427m)	42.4m (-95.2m)	13.5p (-124.1p)	nil (nil)
Redland (F)	2.50bn (2.47bn)	273m (375m)	14.8p (33p)	16.67p (19.42p)
RJB Mining (F)	1.46bn (117m)	173m (16.1m)	67.7p (26.3p)	16p (12.5p)
Senior Engineering (F)	491m (394m)	22.1m (18.1m)	5.04p (4.38p)	3.6p (3.4p)
Slough Estates (F)	- (-)	70.7m (64.0m)	11.1p (9.2p)	8.5p (8.1p)

(F) - Final (I) - Interim (†) - Latest figures 9 months, comparitives 12 months

Buoyant RJB plans £100m buy-back

Black gold: Richard Budge will repay loans by April

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

RJB Mining, the company that bought almost the entire English coalfields from the Government, said yesterday it would seek permission for a £100m share buy-back and added that it would repay the remainder of its acquisition debt by the end of April.

However, the company also warned that its new Asfordby colliery was still plagued by geological problems and that its future was in doubt.

RJB said operating conditions there were "extremely difficult" and that its viability would be assessed within the next six to nine months.

The uncertainty over the pit was the one black spot in a performance that impressed the City. Richard Budge, founder and chief executive, said RJB would ask shareholders for authority to buy back and cancel up to 10 per cent of the shares.

"Strong cash generation will enable the group to repay the remainder of the bank acquisition debt by the end of April 1996 and, therefore, we have been able to deliver greater value to shareholders than projected at the time of the English Coal acquisition," he said.

Mr Budge was speaking as RJB announced a jump in 1995 pre-tax profits to £173m from £16m the previous year, reflecting the full benefit of acquiring the former British Coal mines. Earnings per share soared by 157 per cent to 67.7p and the dividend in the year increased by 28 per cent to 16p.

Gordon McPhie, finance director, said on-going strong cash generation and a high level of dividend cover would allow substantial increases in dividend in the next three years.

"Our dividend cover is still high at 4.2 times compared to an average of around two times. Our intention is to progressively increase the dividend so that around two times' cover is achieved by 1998 or 1999. There is plenty to come."

RJB repaid £313m of debt during the year, leaving £55m outstanding and net gearing of 49 per cent. The company invested £55m in plant and equipment over the 12 months in addition to £300m on mining development. RJB also announced a payment of £500 in shares to each of its employees through the company's Sharesave Trust.

One City analyst said: "The company has done extremely well, outstripping forecasts in the December 1994 prospectus, but the big question is still what happens in 1998 when its contracts with the generators mature." RJB's main customers are National Power and PowerGen. Their contracts with British Coal passed to the company along with the coalfields and are due to expire in 1998.

Coventry ready to cut mortgage rates

CLIFFORD GERMAN

Coventry Building Society yesterday added to the pressure being applied by mutual societies on those converting to bank status.

The society pledged to cut mortgage rates, reward loyal long-term borrowers, and raise interest rates to savers.

Around £20m a year will be given back by Coventry to its members, including both borrowers and savers, roughly half its annual profits. It believes that rival institutions which need to pay dividends to shareholders will not be able to match its move.

Coventry's basic variable mortgage rate will be reduced from 7.49 per cent to 7.25 per cent to all borrowers from next Monday. The new rate compares with Abbey National's current 7.29 per cent, and is the same as the current rate charged by Halifax, but slightly higher than the 6.99 per cent now charged by the most aggressive mutual building societies including the Yorkshire.

Existing customers who have had the same mortgage with the Coventry for the past five years or more will enjoy an even deeper cut, reducing the cost of their mortgage to 6.49 per cent effective from 1 May.

This will save a borrower with a £40,000 endowment mortgage around £30 a month on the current rate, chief executive Martin Ritchley, said yesterday. By the end of this year, roughly half the society's 100,000 borrowers will benefit from the "Privilege Rate."

New borrowers will be offered a 10 day cooling off period after the issue of a mortgage advance, to allow borrowers to change their minds if they are not satisfied with the product they have chosen, with a full refund of any charges or fees. The society's 575,000 investors will also benefit from increases of up to 0.5 per cent on all variable rate savings accounts, instead of the rate reduction they might have expected following the last cut in base rates.

The Coventry's will pay 6.9 per cent net on a £3,000 Tessa account, compared with 6.5 per cent at Halifax and 6 per cent at Abbey National.

market report/shares

DATA BANK

FT-SE 100
3672.6 +0.2

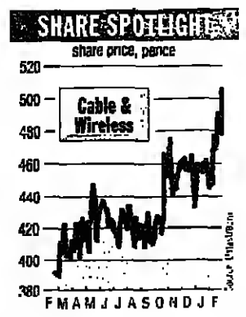
FT-SE 250
4309.4 +3.7

FT-SE 350
1851.6 +0.5

SEAQ VOLUME
1bn shares,
46,611 bargains

Gilts Index
91.84 -0.54

SHARE SPOTLIGHT



Last-minute rescue for struggling bio-babe Proteus

Proteus, the computerised drugs group, seems to have won its battle for survival – in the nick of time.

The group has made no secret of its desperate desire for cash and was thought to be down to its last few pennies.

Its saviour is Kevin Leech, the multi-millionaire Channel Islander who controls **ML Laboratories**, the drugs group thought to be on the verge of a deal with Glaxo Wellcome.

Through his private company, Milner Laboratories, Mr. Leech is buying up to 29.9 per cent of Proteus, including a £1.5m rights issue subscription.

The deal should provide Proteus with the resources to continue its work and will possibly give the group a much needed cash flow, through a licensing deal.

Proteus is one of the bio-babes which has failed to perform and could be regarded as a warning to the investment herds chasing the junior drug shares. Four years ago the shares were riding high at 496p but since then they have wilted as the group's difficulties became increasingly apparent.

On the ML deal its shares rose 7p to 72p; ML slipped 6p to 431p.

The big stock market story involved **Cable and Wireless** and BT: a deal between the two telecom giants was confidently expected and after trading Cable duly confirmed "exploratory discussions" were again under way.

For much of the session the market was on tenterhooks, speculating about the rumoured deal. There was talk of Cable and BT talking to US investors and discreet meetings to persuade the Whitehall powers to sanction what would be Britain's biggest-ever corporate liaison, possibly worth as much as £35bn.

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

The BT/Cable story has, in varying degrees, been sloshing around the system for the past few days. At one time it seemed the deal was off. But BT's increasingly strained relationship with its industry regulator and Cable's management vacuum have encouraged the two to resume talks.

Cable shares shot ahead 34p to 511.5p, a peak. Seaq put volume at more than 10 million shares. They should make further headway today. BT gained 14.5p to 348.5p.

Because of Cable's ramshackle overseas investments, including control of the powerful Hongkong Telecom, there is a firm belief that any deal will be undertaken through a reverse takeover – Cable bidding for BT. Rumours suggested the terms would value Cable at approaching 590p.

Orange ignored the telecom buzz, ending 7p lower at 230.5p.

The BT/Cable excitement helped the FT-SE 100 shares index to end the day with a plus, albeit a modest 0.2 points to 3,672.6. At one time it was down 22.4 on disappointment that German interest rates were unchanged.

Utilities were mixed following the **United Utilities** shake out. UU gained 14p to 611p; **Hyder**, another combined electricity and water group, rose 18p to 752p.

Ladbroke, the betting and hotels group, continued to attract speculative attention. It has been in the firing line for four months and despite the lack of action a surprisingly large number of market players remain convinced a deal is in the offing.

Bass, the brewing and hotel group, remains the favourite to strike, although the US Hilton Hotel Corporation and British brewing groups Scottish & Newcastle and Whitbread are regarded as possible predatory candidates.

The shares cantered ahead 3.5p (after 6p) to 192.5p in brisk trading. Observers believe Ladbroke is currently under examination and so long as any investigation does not produce a negative conclusion the predator will show its hand in the next few weeks.

Stakis, the casino and hotel group, was also thrust into the bids frame. Scottish, which has trading lines with Stakis and was once a significant shareholder, was said to be on the prowl.

The theory is that Scottish has become much more conscious about the attraction of big catering pubs as well as hotels since it acquired the Chef & Brewer pubs chain from Grand Metropolitan. Stakis gained 2p to 104p, a 12-month high, in busy trading.

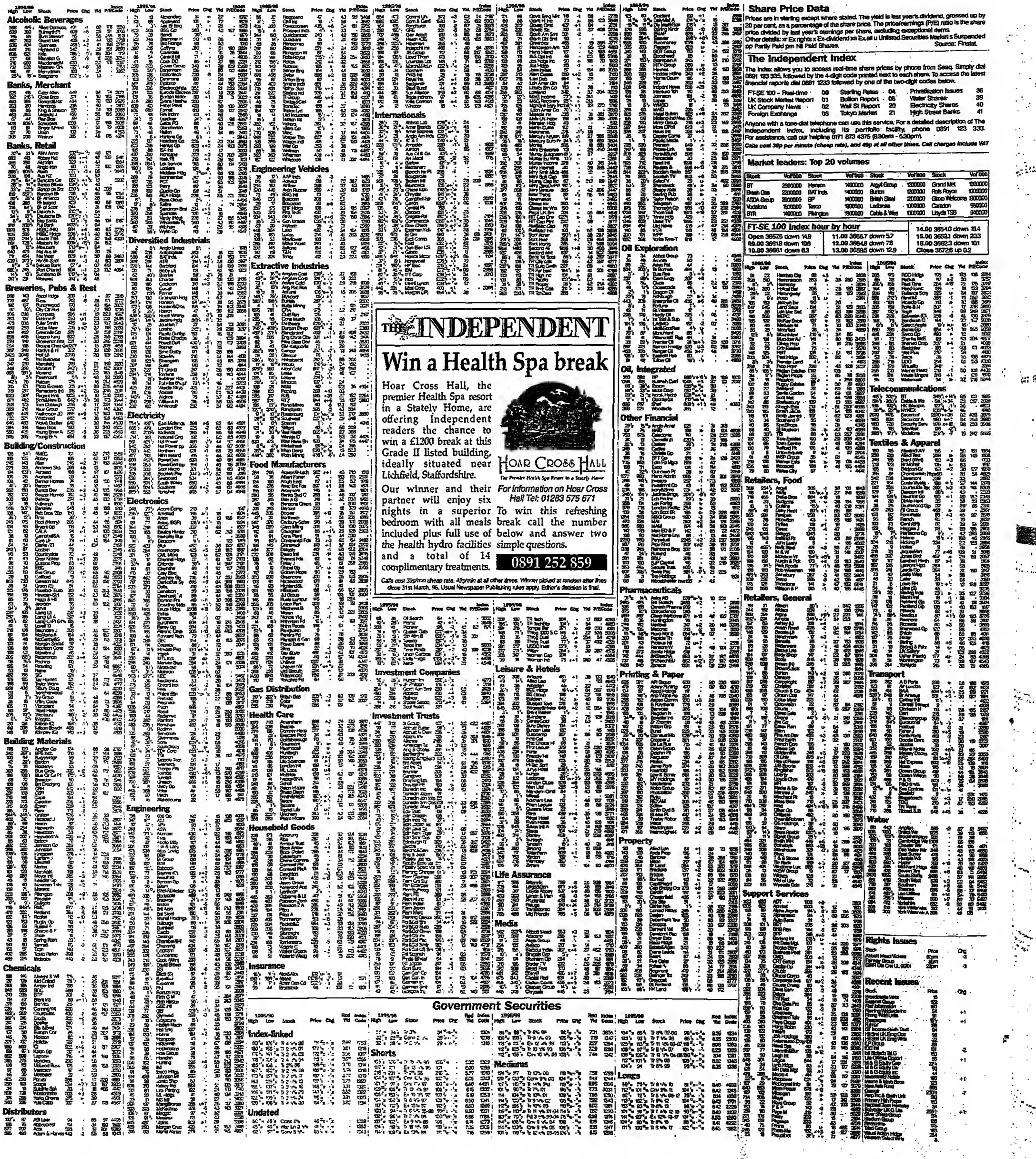
JKX Oil & Gas was one of a number of companies operating in the former Soviet Union to move ahead as a leading securities house, thought to be Salomon Brothers, made positive noises about prospects. The shares rose 13p to 156p. **Bula Resources** edged forward 0.5p to 3.25p.

But **Pan Andean**, the high flyer seeking oil in Bolivia, had a subdued session, falling 11p to 70p.

TAKING STOCK

❑ **Biotrace International is the latest bio babe to attract a buy recommendation from Dr Erling Refsum, the drugs analyst at Yamaichi, the Japanese group, who has achieved a reputation as a shrewd pharmaceutical follower. He sees the company edging into profits next year and is impressed with the new management and the beneficial changes which have followed. The shares held at 61p.**

❑ **Vaux, the brewer and hotelier, has abandoned its bid to become a nursing home power. It has hung a "for sale" sign over its 35 St Andrews care homes and will use the resultant cash to develop its pubs and hotels. Some believe the group is a takeover target with its hotels the prime attraction. The shares held at 272p.**



Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.
Other details: xr Ex rights x Ex-dividend xa Ex all u Unlisted Securities Market s Suspended pp Partly Paid pm Nil Paid Shares.
Source: Finstat.

The Independent Index

The Index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from Seaq. Simply dial 0891 123 333, followed by the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0891 1233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

FT-SE 100 - Real-time	00	Sterling Rates	04	Privatisation Issues	36
UK Stock Market Report	01	Bullion Report	05	Water Shares	39
UK Company News	02	Wall St Report	20	Electricity Shares	40
Foreign Exchange	03	Tokyo Market	21	High Street Banks	41

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Calls cost 39p per minute (cheap rate), and 49p at all other times. Call charges include VAT

Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000	Stock	Vol'000
BT	2500000	Hanson	1400000	Argyll Group	1000000	Grand Met	1000000
British Gas	2200000	BAT Inds.	1400000	Burton	1000000	Rolls Royce	1000000
ASDA Group	2000000	BP	1400000	British Steel	1000000	Glaxo Wellcome	1000000
Vodafone	1800000	Tesco	1300000	Ladbroke	1000000	Caradon	950000
BTR	1400000	Pilkington	1300000	Cable & Wire	1000000	Lloyds TSB	940000

FT-SE 100 Index hour by hour

Open 3657.5 down 14.9		14.00 3654.0 down 18.4	
09.00 3651.8 down 10.6		15.00 3652.1 down 20.3	
10.00 3666.1 down 6.3		11.00 3666.7 down 5.7	
12.00 3664.8 down 7.6		13.00 3659.5 down 12.9	
16.00 3652.3 down 20.1		Close 3672.6 up 0.2	

Government Securities

Index-linked
Shorts
Medium
Longs
Undated

Rights Issues

Stock	Price	Chg
Abbott Mead Vickers	80m	3
Fairway Group	8m	
GWR Dis Cnv UL 95/01	22m	3

Recent Issues

Stock	Price	Chg
Broadcastle Wts	15	
Bywater Group	100	
Fast Forward	100	
Fleming Worldwide Inc	100	
Fleming Wtd Units	100	
Pennagen	197	+1
Rumar	99	
GT Income Gwth Trust	100	
HI Strt UK Emrg Cos	100	
HI Strt UK Emrg Wts	100	
LF Group	100	
UDC Int	100	-2
US Biotech Tst C	100	
Life Office Support	100	+1
M & G Equity Cap	100	
M & G Equity Dd	100	
M & G Equity Inc	100	
Mercantile Rnts	100	+1
Merrill & Mnyc Bcos	100	
New Asia Fund	100	
Oasis	100	
Pen Inc & Gwth Unit	100	
Primary Hlth Props	100	
Rockwell Auto Homeway	100	
Schroder UK G Uts	100	
Silver Shield Group	100	
Stockform Group	100	
Tibet Group	100	
Visual Action Hldgs	264	
Western Select Wts	8	

Rail privatisation set to put 20,000 jobs on the line

INDUSTRY VIEW

PETER RODGERS

The Rail, Maritime and Transport Union believes 20,000 to 30,000 jobs are at risk as a result of railway privatisation. Privately, many investors in the 42 rail businesses that have already been sold off would probably agree.

It is hard to think of a better reason, from a purely investment perspective, to put money into the Railtrack flotation in May or into one of the many sales of BR subsidiaries that are under way.

A crude rule of thumb in the City is that whatever the job cuts achieved in an industry while it is in the public sector, there is usually at least another 30 per cent of efficiency gains to be found once the privatisation has taken place, and much of that is likely to be achieved by a reduction in headcount.

Apply that percentage to the railways, and the numbers put forward by the RMT look perfectly reasonable. In the longer term, they might even prove on the low side.

It is a curious fact, however, that railway jobs are hardly ever discussed in public by ministers, government advisers or the owners of newly-privatised rail companies. It is like a phoney war, with the real campaign unlikely to begin until the main privatisations are through.

The signalmen's strike in 1994 underlined how much damage could be done to the industry by a dispute between a national union and a centralised management.

There is little benefit for the Government in reminding investors of this fact of life by boasting publicly about the potential for job saving and stirring up the anger of the unions. Indeed, until recently ministers have been claiming unconvincingly that the sell-off could create additional jobs.

Government advisers say that nobody in Whitehall has even attempted to calculate the possible impact of privatisation on jobs right across the railways, and now the railways are so fragmented the exercise may never be possible again.

> Railtrack is most vulnerable to strike action: if it is brought to a halt so is the whole railway system

Labour, too, has less to gain than appears at at first sight from making the potential for job losses a central part of its anti-privatisation campaign. Digging in its heels against job cuts and efficiency gains would make New Labour sound just like the old.

The organisation that probably has the least potential for immediate large job cuts is probably Railtrack, though one insider claims it should still be perfectly possible to weed out 10 to 15 per cent of the 11,000 headcount over the next couple of years.

As the only truly national organisation left in the rail system, Railtrack remains the most vulnerable to strike action because if it is brought to a halt so is the entire railway network.

For Labour, the reality is that this would make renationalisation into a poisoned chalice because in government it would be on one side of the table in any dispute. The signalmen's strike got rid of some old Spanish customs in Railtrack and tidied up a mass of union agreements, some dating back to 1919. But Bob Horton, Railtrack's chairman, has good reason to tread softly when seeking further staff reductions.

Apart from the risk of strikes, there is the question of safety, which has been a highly sensitive issue since the Clapham disaster in 1988. According to British Rail, that was partly responsible for a rethink of the rate of contraction and a modest increase in rail jobs up to 1993 (see chart.)

The biggest potential for job reductions is to be found elsewhere in the system. Railtrack took the absolute minimum of staff out of the old British Rail, leaving all its service functions to be privatised separately. The intention was to make industrial relations easier to handle by splitting the behemoth of British Rail into many smaller and more manageable parts.

When Railtrack was separated from BR, Mr Horton left 40,000 people in BR operations such as maintenance and track renewal which are essential to the company's functioning.

The result is that all the really big economies are to be found in the bits that Railtrack left behind, and especially the British Rail Infrastructure Services Companies, which at the end of the last financial year had 22,000 staff.

These are the companies that employ the maintenance and construction workers who keep the track, bridges, tunnels and signalling in order.

Not only have the BR businesses been splintered by dozens of management buyouts and takeovers by construction firms, but smaller sub-contractors are splitting it still further. The RMT cites cases of track and signalling employees taking redundancy from British Rail on a Friday and coming back as sub-contractors the following Monday.

The balance of industrial relations power has shifted firmly towards employers.

Although track renewal work will receive a boost from a stepped-up investment programme, including the West Coast main line and the ThamesLink 2,000 project, staffing in the Bris companies as a whole looks set to decline sharply over the next few years.

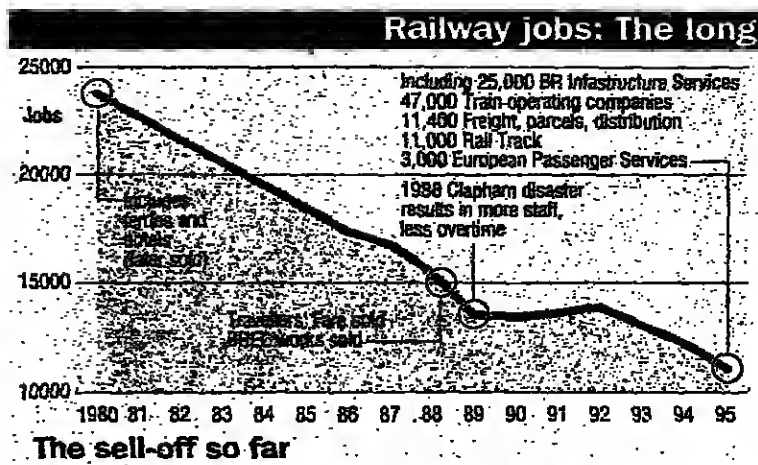
The same pattern is expected in many other former BR subsidiaries. It has already been seen at the former British Rail Engineering works, which were taken over by ABB with 8,500 employees, and are now down to 5,000.

Insiders claim that there is even bigger potential for job cuts among the train operating companies, which employ 47,000 people, including most of the drivers. They, too, have been fragmented, into 25 separate companies.

Stagecoach, the bus company that runs South West Trains – one of the first two train operating franchises let – has so far told the RMT of 125 job losses and is expected to announce several hundred more among the rail operator's 4,000 staff. There is no sign yet that Stagecoach is about to confront the powerful drivers' unions, where the scope for improving working practices is said to be just as great as it was with British Airways pilots a decade ago.

But job cuts are as central to the economics of the railway privatisation as they were with electricity and water, and the process has hardly begun.

Railway jobs: The long decline



The sell-off so far

Rolling stock leasing companies	All 3 sold £1.8bn
Train franchises	2 sold, 23 to go
Red Star	Sold
Rail Express Systems	Sold
Freightliner	Final bids in
Track maintenance & renewal	6 sold, rest in negotiation
Design & specialist engineering	7 sold
Heavy maintenance depots	All 6 sold
BR Telecoms	Sold
Central Services	All 12 sold
Railtrack	Floats May £1.8bn

Foreign Exchange Rates

	Sterling			Dollar			D-Mark
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot
US	15233	8-6	24-21	1000	—	—	08785
Canada	20786	11-3	50-37	13633	2-1	2-0	09223
Germany	22515	56-48	157-147	14781	28-26	80-78	10000
France	76863	140-118	371-340	50460	64-57	164-154	34138
Italy	23949	75-90	221-246	15722	57-64	170-182	106367
Japan	16211	75-70	225-218	10643	45-44	136-133	72012
ECU	12130	15-11	45-40	12558	7-8	23-25	05387
Belgium	46276	12-8	34-29	30380	58-48	172-147	205534
Denmark	86932	138-95	411-317	57070	60-40	175-125	38610
Netherlands	25196	63-54	189-175	16541	32-29	96-81	11191
Ireland	09703	9-5	25-20	15700	3-6	6-10	04309
Norway	97855	116-64	329-233	64241	42-17	110-60	43482
Spain	18948	39-48	117-134	12439	32-36	97-105	841553
Sweden	10338	9-15	23-34	66553	98-123	260-310	45026
Switzerland	18077	68-60	197-185	11933	38-35	111-105	08073
Australia*	19463	20-31	67-85	12776	19-21	54-58	08644
Hong Kong	11778	101-61	224-170	77320	2-12	15-35	52310
Malaysia	38665	0-0	0-0	25383	4-14	60-80	17173
New Zealand*	22477	43-57	133-156	14756	30-32	88-90	09883
Saudi Arabia	57130	0-0	0-0	37505	2-7	9-14	25374
Singapore	21462	0-0	0-0	14089	41-30	103-88	09532

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	15231	09997	Nigeria	136918	833000
Austria	158330	103942	Oman	05867	03851
Brazil	15049	09877	Pakistan	525421	344855
China	127000	83355	Philippines	399488	262200
Egypt	51764	33990	Portugal	232763	152800
Finland	70753	46438	Qatar	55464	36420
Ghana	239034	1569.80	Russia	739555	485400
Greece	367325	241090	South Africa	61020	40050
India	518667	340500	Taiwan	415181	272500
Kuwait	04560	02993	UAE	65971	38736

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount: subtract from spot rate
rate quoted low to high are at a premium: add to spot rate
*Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals.
For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0891 123 3033.
Calls cost 36p per minute (cheap rate) 48p other times.

Interest Rates

UK		Germany		US		Japan	
Base	6.00%	Discount	3.00%	Prime	8.75%	Discount	0.50%
France		Lombard	5.00%	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	
Intervention	3.80%	Canada		Fed Funds	5.25%	Discount	3.00%
Italy		Prime	7.00%	Spain		Central	3.30%
Discount	9.00%	Discount	5.50%	10-Day Repo	8.05%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.50%
Advances	3.00%	Discount	3.75%	Repo (Ave)	7.80%	Lombard	4.125%

Bond Yields

HSBC Markets Research

Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
UK	8.00%	7.54	8½%	8.16	Netherlands	9%	5.15	6%	6.46
US	5⅞%	6.15	5⅞%	6.39	Spain	10¼%	9.14	10.15%	9.87
Japan	6.4%	1.84	3¼%	3.18	Italy	10½%	10.38	10½%	10.89
Australia	8¾%	8.64	10%	8.90	Belgium	7¼%	5.58	6½%	6.82
Germany	5¾%	5.18	6%	6.45	Sweden	11%	7.84	6%	8.48
France	5¼%	5.78	7¼%	6.60	ECU OAT	9½%	6.29	7½%	7.12

Yields calculated on local basis (new benchmark)

Money Market Rates

	O'Night	7 Day	1 Month	3	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	5¾ 6⅛	6⅛ 6	5¹⁵⁄₁₆ 6⅛	6 6⅛	6⅛ 6¼	6⅜ 6¼
Sterling CDs	-	-	6	6	6⅛	6¼
Local Authority Deps	5¹⁵⁄₁₆	5⅞	5¹⁵⁄₁₆	6	6⅛	6¼
Discount Market Deps	5⅞	5⅞	-	-	-	-
Treasury Bills (Buy)	-	-	5¹⁵⁄₁₆	5⅞	-	-
Dollar CDs	-	-	5.10	5.12	5.20	5.44
ECU Linked Dep	-	-	4⅞ 4¾	4¾ 4⅝	4¾ 4⅝	4¾ 4⅝

Tourist Rates

£ Buys		£ Buys		£ Buys	
Australia(Dollars)	18800	France(Francs)	74500	New Zealand(Dollars)	22100
Austria(Schillings)	152500	Germany(Marks)	22000	Norway(Kroner)	95700
Belgium(Francs)	448000	Greece(Drachmae)	3620000	Portugal(Escudos)	2270000
Canada(Dollars)	20125	Hong Kong(Dollars)	115400	Spain(Pesetas)	1837500
Cyprus(Pounds)	06975	Ireland(Punts)	09425	Sweden(Kronor)	100000
Denmark(Kroner)	84800	Italy(Lira)	23450000	Switzerland(Francs)	17625
Holland(Guilders)	24650	Japan(Yen)	1605000	Turkey(Lira)	99900.0000
Finland(Marks)	69900	Malta(Lira)	05400	United States(Dollars)	14825

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract		Settlement price	High/Low for day		EstConts traded	Open interest
Long Gilt	(Jun 96)	104-08	104-18	103-25	58767	112012
German Bond	(Jun 96)	9607	9629	9575	175198	214775
J.G.Bond	(Jun 96)	11885	11891	11880	896	0
Italian Bond						
3M Sterling	(Jun 96)	9390	9392	9389	11794	80801
	(Sep 96)	9368	9373	9365	15729	58607
3M Euro $	(Jun 96)	9675	9679	9671	38695	231708
3M Euromark	(Dec 96)	9635	9640	9628	49193	178507
	(Mar 97)	9601	9606	9593	27361	114544
ECU	(Jun 96)	9826	9828	9821	3771	27573
	(Sep 96)	9811	9815	9807	1372	13198
Euro SFr	(Jun 96)	36820	36820	36450	12468	61427
FT-SE 100	(Jun 96)	43130	43130	43130	79	3590
FT-SE 250	(Jun 96)	9035	9039	9030	12702	41892
Eurofra	(Jun 96)	10805	10815	10745	47981	4919

Liffe FT-SE Index Option

Settlement price: 3668.0 — closing offer price

Series	3600	3650	3700	3750	Call/Put Total/vols
Apr	92/20	56/34	30/59	13/92	- -
May	118/40	86/58	59/82	36/110	- -
Jun	139/60	108/78	81/101	57/128	- -
Jul	162/74	132/93	104/116	81/143	- -

Energy

Brent Crude ($/barrel) IPE 5.30pm		*chg	Yr ago	Gas oil ($/tonne) IPE	close	*chg	WTI	6pm	Products † Spot CIF NW Europe	($/tonne)
May	1904	-078	1658	Apr	18800	-950	May	2115	Leaded Gasoline	204/206
Jun	1803	-057	1655	May	17100	-675	Jun	1975	Naphtha	183/185
Jul	1740	-041	1653	Jun	16075	-500	July	1906	EC Gasoil	201/203
Vol: 27,618	Index: 19.94			Vol:	15,968		Aug	1855	Heavy Fuel Oil	104/106

*since 5.30pm previous day. Year ago prices average for week. Source: IDS-London Oil Reports †6pm prices

Commodity Indices

GCSI Indices

	Base date	+ Spot	%chg Day	31 Dec	%chg YTD	Year ago	%chg Yr
Index	1970=100	20821	+007	20350	+232	17900	+1632
Agricultural	1970=100	29025	-017	28175	+302	24281	+1964
Energy	1983=100	7310	+006	7131	+251	6030	+2122
Indust'l Metals	1977=100	18949	-023	19332	-198	20438	-728
Livestock	1970=100	18774	+084	18271	+275	17084	+983
Precious Metals	1973=100	51144	-004	48986	+441	48430	+561

Source: Goldman Sachs & Co. GSCI is a trademark and servicemark of Goldman, Sachs & Co. †Close as of 27 March '96

Industrial Metals

London Metal Exchange

	$/tonne Cash	3 mths	Volume	LME Stocks		chg
Aluminium HG	1542-43	1672-73	35784	733600	+	2700
Aluminium Alloy	1385-95	1427-31	493	78860	+	1180
Copper A	25375-395	2526-27	39365	328450	-	10800
Lead	8115-135	7865-885	6489	99250	+	775
Nickel	8245-55	8345-50	7617	34788	-	678
Tin	6380-90	6400-10	4769	9065	-	160
Zinc	1066-67	10895-90	1215	621550	-	2800

Settlement Conversion exchange rates. £/$ 15223 $/Dm 14793 $/¥ 10648 Stock volumes & change in tonnes as at Tuesday 26 March

Precious Metals

Spink & Son

pm fix /oz	$	£	Coins	$	£		$	£
Platinum	41225	27070	Britannia	414	272	Krugrands	390/402	256/64
Palladium	13900	9125	Britannia.5 oz	206	135	Sovs	91/96	60/63
Silver spot	564	370	Britannia.25 oz	104	68	Nobles	405/20	266/76
Gold Bullion	398	26120	Britannia.10 oz	52	34	Maple Leaf	400/14	263/72

Agricultural

CMS

Cocoa LCE	£/tonne	Coffee LCE	$/tonne	Barley LCE	£/tonne	Potatoes LCE	£/tonne	Potatoes APA	Gid/100kg
Mar	950	Mar	2024	Mar	11080	Apr	16700	Apr	310
May	948	May	1931	May	10665	May	17230	May	265
July	973	July	1878	Sept	10865	Jun	22500	Jun	279
Vol:	16,465	Vol:	2,777	Vol:	76	Vol:	98	Vol:	397

White Sugar LCE	$/tonne	Raw Sugar LCE	Cents/lbs	Freight LCE	$10/index pt	Wheat LCE	£/tonne	Corn CBOT	Cents/bushel Hi-Lo	Settl
May	39240	May	1190	Mar	1437	Mar	12530	Mar	39975-39800	39875
Aug	36870	Jul	1180	Apr	1525	May	12740	May	38450-38300	38375
Oct	33350	Oct	1190	Vol:	286	July	11130	Jul	33250-33125	33150
Vol:	2,925	Vol:	0	Index	1445	Vol:	969			

Other Softs

Mar	Mace (No.3)**	$/tonne	1465	May/Jul	Soya Oil§	FL/100kg	900
Mar/Apr	Copra (1)	$/tonne	1710	Mar/Apr	Coconut Oil (†)	$/tonne	7225
May	Cotton (NY)	UScent/lb	8385	Apr/May	Sunflower Oil§	$/tonne	5600
Apr	Wool	Acent/kg	6620	Apr	Rapeseed Oil§	FL/100kg	880
Apr	Rubber*	Mcent/kg	3895	Apr/May	Groundnut Oil	$/tonne	9050

Origin: §Dutch/EC • (any origin • †Philippines/Indonesia *Malaysia ***W Europe Source: FT Information/Reuters

Latest Unit Trust Prices

Stock	Sell	Buy	Yld
AXA Equity & Law Unit Trust Managers			
AXA Equity & Law Hse, Corporation St, Coventry CV1 1GD			
Tel: 01203 553231			
General Acc	6329	6730	d286
General Inc	5374	5718	d286
UK Growth Acc	4288	4562	283
UK Growth Inc	2857	3040	283
Higher Inc Acc	7742	8237	426
Higher Inc Inc	4308	4584	426
Gilts/Fxd Int Acc	2034	2148	d573
Gilts/Fxd Int Inc	9103	9635	d573
Nth American	3637	3870	000
Europe	3494	3718	d048
Japan Tst Acc	4885	5197	d000
Pacific Basin Tst Acc	4258	4530	077
Bri Excell	8491	9033	302
Bri Fndmtls Acc	1128	1200	d490
Bri Fndmtls Inc	7733	8227	d490
Global Opps	1020	1086	028
Balanced Acc	6192	6586	271
Balanced Inc	5925	6304	271
Barclays Unicorn Limited			
11 Broadway, Stratford, London, E15 4BJ			
Tel: 0181 5345544			
Balanced Trusts			
Brst Inv Fd Acc	8415	8775	257
Brst Inv Fd Inc	4062	4230	257
European Bd Acc	1121	1160	682
European Bd Inc	9484	9817	682
Exempt	7686	8382	39
Financial	9130	1004	247
500	4948	5349	d253
General	3100	3319	d258
Property	2410	2585	d629
Trustee	2138	2288	239
Income Trusts			
Cash Acc	1218	1218	d532
Cash Inc	1000	1000	d532
Distribution	1104	1109	d835
Extra Income	1330	1423	487
Gilt & Fxd Int*	5684	5884	d829
Income	5690	6066	48
Income Builder	6737	7186	d55
Intl Income	7022	7470	303
Growth Trusts - UK			
Capital	1387	1426	d238
Growth Acc	3979	4245	238
Leisure (2)	1869	1785	087
Recovery	4705	5032	274
Smlr Cos Acc	6283	6738	207
Smlr Cos Inc	5408	5808	207
Special Sits	3650	3914	14

Stock	Sell	Buy	Yld
Managed Fund	7580	8074	292
Managed Fund Acc	9883	10524	292
UK Growth Funds			
Smaller Cos	4832	5138	159
Smaller Cos Acc	5607	5959	159
UK & General	9169	9754	282
UK & General Acc	11787	12538	282
UK Growth	17364	18472	339
International Growth Funds			
Europe Growth	21082	22428	011
Far Eastern Growth	14381	15276	000
Global Bond	8475	9008	587
Global Bond Acc	9571	10173	587
Japan Growth	12182	12960	000
North American Growth	23236	24637	000
Oriental Growth	8738	9296	008
Worldwide Growth	7564	8047	000
Worldwide Growth Acc	7899	8403	000
Other CU Unit Trusts (non PPT Funds)			
CUDOS Japan Equity	10689	10839	000
CUDOS UK Equity	10488	10670	227
CUDOS US Equity	10833	11085	103
Deposit Fund	9395	9356	623
Deposit Fund Acc	10368	10368	523
Homemaker Fund	9021	9597	d157
Quilter Fund	14948	15900	d187
Quilter Fund Acc	17590	18713	d187
CU Morley (Only Geoffrey Morley Unit Ltd)			
Exempt Unit Trust	20256	20787	217
Framlington Unit Mngt Ltd			
155 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 3FT			
Tel: 0171-374 4100, Dealing 0171 330 6500			
American Growth	7787	8306	d000
(Accum Units)	7787	8298	d000
Amer Smlr Cos	6481	6942	000
(Accum Units)	6551	7092	000
Capital Tst	3782	3870	d114
(Accum Units)	5452	5800	d114
Contl Smlr Cos	6503	6928	083
(Accum Units)	6862	7310	083
Convertible	1357	1444	553
(Accum Units)	2880	3064	553
Emerging Markets	6943	7435	000
(Accum Units)	6967	7443	000
European	1421	1507	029
(Accum Units)	1496	1565	029
Exempt Balanced	743	7543	258
(Accum Units)	7592	8033	258
Extra Income	3713	3950	380
(Accum Units)	5779	6148	380
Financial	1603	1705	043
(Accum Units)	1697	1805	043
Gilt Trust	6402	6801	598

Key
d — ex dividend
e — exit charge when units sold
buy — formerly 'offer'
sell — formerly 'bid'
x — Non SIB recognised funds

Copies of the most recent managers' reports and scheme particulars are available from fund managers free on request

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sport

Chamorin has heart to stir Paris romance

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

The Sheffield Eagles will adopt an uncharacteristic role at the Charlety Stadium in Paris tonight when they try to stamp on Super League's most fragile bloom.

The Eagles are the best – some would say only – example of successful expansion of rugby league's boundaries in Britain. Now they present a daunting barricade in the way of the Paris St-Germain club's hopes of establishing themselves. "I wish them well," Sheffield's founding father, Gary Hetherington, said. "Although we want to beat them, it is very important that they are seen to be competitive."

Having examined the available evidence, he believes that they will be. "They will be much harder to beat at home than people are expecting." Paris are led by one player Hetherington would have loved to put in a Sheffield shirt tonight, but Pierre Chamorin opted to stay in France rather than join his friend and fellow-countryman, Jean-Marc Garcia, in south Yorkshire.

"Chamorin is a class centre. He just glides over the ground," Hetherington said. He also knows and respects the ability of two other Frenchmen who have passed through the Don Valley, Laurent Lucchese and Frederic Banquet, as well as Patrick Entat, the national side's scrum-half and captain, who played for Hull and Leeds.

The Paris chief executive, Tas Baitieri, who has watched the players blend into a team over the past few weeks, is another who believes that they will exceed all expectations. "There is tremendous pride in this squad," he said. "Other teams underestimate us at their peril."

There are problems, however, with injuries depriving Paris of three of their original selections for their opening match: Bernard Lacombe, David Despin and Frederic Teixido. On top of that, the tenuous professionalism of the game in France is underlined by the withdrawal of Pascal Jampy, because he has not been able to get time off from his employers.

For part-time players based in the south, as all the current squad are, travel to Paris to prepare for matches is likely to be a recurring headache. "We would like to relocate everyone to Paris, but that would be very costly," Baitieri says. For the meantime, PSG will be the best-travelled team in Super League, taking as long to trek to Paris as most English clubs.

Some members of the side have travelled a long way already. As well as three Australians and a New Zealander in tonight's line-up, they also have the former captain of the Polish rugby union team, Gregory Kacala, and the Moldovan, Mikhail Piscunov, on the wing in place of Lacombe.

Piscunov has been timed as faster than Martin Offiah and has been a target for clubs in Australia and Britain, so his inclusion should not weaken the side unduly.

There will be some well-travelled supporters at tonight's game as well. Apart from more than 1,000 fans who are travelling from Sheffield, a ticket offer through a French TV channel has been taken up by more than 10,000 people, many of them from league's heartland in the south. Baitieri is confident of a crowd of 15,000 and says that the Charlety Stadium's 22,000 capacity could be reached.

Personal touch: Terry Casey readies Rough Quest for tomorrow's Grand National. 'The price is still unrealistic and he's sure to drift more' Photograph: Robert Hallam

Calm Casey seeks a place in the sun

Ken Jones encounters Rough Quest's trainer who is geared up for the National

It was cold for the time of year, cold enough to make Terry Casey nervous. "Couldn't be happier with the horse," he said, "but I'd like to feel a change in the weather."

A bit of warmth is what Casey wants for Rough Quest, the 10-year-old, Irish-bred gelding he is sending out at Aintree tomorrow in the Martell Grand National.

No wonder. A nip in the air, Casey thinks, was one of the reasons why Rough Quest did not mount a more serious challenge for the Gold Cup at the Cheltenham Festival two weeks ago, finishing second to Imperial Call. "When the leaders broke away down the hill he was left with too much to do but I am fairly sure that the temperature troubled him. Likes the sun on his back, but then don't we all," Casey said.

On a summer's day the views from Beare Green near Dorking in Surrey can be quite glorious but on Tuesday mist shrouded the surrounding hills, a metaphor for Aintree's uncertainty. As always, imponderables crowd in on assessment. Getting a horse in peak condition for the race is a feat in itself, never mind the doubts Casey may still harbour about Rough Quest's involvement just two weeks since the Gold Cup when victory would have earned the horse a long vacation. "No question about that," Casey said. "We wouldn't have entertained the Grand National and I was not sure about what to do until last Saturday. When we got back from Cheltenham he seemed well enough, not greatly affected, and there was the alternative of the Irish National."

Important factors in a discussion Casey held with his employer, Andrew Wates, who owns Rough Quest, were a distinctly favourable weight of 10st 7lb and Aintree's anti-clockwise direction. "It suits the horse to go that way around," Casey added, "but even with those advantages he was ridiculously short in the betting."

Casey, who claims to have never struck a bet in the 25 years he has spent racing since beginning an apprenticeship with Aubrey Brabazon at the Curragh, advises supporters of Rough Quest to play a waiting game. "To my mind, the price is still unrealistic and he's sure to drift a bit more," he said.

The trainer was sitting in the cluttered lounge of a comfortable cottage set across from the small, tidy yard that is home to Rough Quest and 15 other horses. A man of average height with alert eyes, he had on working clothes and slippers. Smoke swirled from the small cigar he held in strong fingers.

On one wall there was the usual array of past achievements: Rough Quest winning the Ritz Club Chase at Cheltenham last year, scoring at the Punchestown Festival, more recently successful in the Racing Post Chase when brought home by Richard Dunwoody.

While Dunwoody may have fancied the ride on Rough Quest tomorrow, trainer and owner have remained loyal to Mick Fitzgerald. "He knows the horse well, gets on with him," Casey said, "so I have no worries in that respect."

An interesting man, Casey conveys that impression of grizzly strength Bill Shankly saw in Tom Finney. You can sense independence, too. This week when BBC television cameras were wrongly positioned to get footage of Rough Quest at full gallop, Casey understandably refused to stage a repeat performance. "All the attention we have been getting is very nice and, of course, it is good for the stable," he said. "But you have to draw the line somewhere. My priority is the horse's preparation. I ride him myself here, personally see to his diet and feeding, and I roll the gallops."

Born in Donegal 50 years ago, Casey knows the ups and downs of life, coming to his present position as a salaried trainer after the bleak experience that resulted from a decision to set up on his own in Lambourn. "I'd gained plenty of experience as a head lad to Paddy Mullins, and when looking after John Upson's horses [Casey sent out Over The Road to win the 1988 National Hunt Chase at Cheltenham] but when I went on my own things did not work out and after four pretty depressing years I sold the stables."

A change of fortune came when Casey answered an advertisement placed by the Wates family. "You only have to look around to see that this is a wonderful set-up," he said. "The Wates are fine people to work for, and I can train for other owners without any of the financial pressures that can cripple you in this business."

At about one o'clock in the afternoon, Casey was relishing an hour's break from his chores and the respite from the presence of interrogators. Sitting back in an easy chair, he lit another cigar, his daily ration increasing as the great race draws nearer.

It is not one about which he knows a great deal. "Of course, I've been at Aintree before," he said, "but to train a horse for the National is a new experience." The way to tackle it is common knowledge anyway. Hunt around the first circuit, stay in touch with the pace then get ready for a big effort from the last, on past the Elbow. If only it were so simple.

Casey went silent, drawing again on his cigar. "I just hope it isn't a slog," he said. "Hate to see horses hurt." Never mind the glory, the thing uppermost in Casey's mind is Rough Quest's welfare.

"Have you spent much time in Ireland?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Lovely place, lovely," he added. His thoughts were momentarily far from Aintree.

JUST THE TICKET: A guide for the sporting spectator

This weekend

TODAY

BOWLS: Mixed Fours finals (York). Play starts in round-robin format at 9.30am and from 10.30am tomorrow. The winners of each group contest the quarter-finals at 5.30pm. Sunday's programme: semi-finals 10am, final 2pm. Spectating is free. York and Dist IBC, 302 Thanet Road, Dringhouses, York. (Tel: 01904 704180).

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL: FA Carling Premiership, Endsleigh League and Bell's Scottish League.
RUGBY LEAGUE: Stones Super League: Halifax v London Broncos (5.30); Oldham v Wigan (3.0) (at Boundary Park, Oldham). First and Second Divisions.
RUGBY UNION: Courage Clubs' Championship, Heineken Welsh League, Insurance Corporation League, Tennents 1556 Cup fifth round. Willis Corroon Trophy: Army v Royal Navy (3.0) (at Twickenham).
RACING (Flat meetings in capitals): BEVERLEY: Club £12; Junior Club (16 to 21-year-olds) £8; Tattersalls £8, Silver Ring £3; Course Enclosure £2; Picnic area £2 or £2 per car, plus £2 per occupant. (2.0). WOLVERHAMPTON (AW): Entrance £6, additional £10 for entrance to Viewing Restaurant; additional £15.90 for meal. (7.0). **Aintree:** County Aintree Roof £65; Queen Mother Stand Roof or reserved seat £60; County Stand Roof or reserved seat £55; Glenlivet Stand £45; County Lawn £29; Tattersalls £16 (Child £4); Steeplechase Enclosure £7 (Child £2). Car parks: County reserved £25; Central £12; Steeplechase £5. (1.35). **Hereford:** Club £12; Tattersalls £9, course enclosure £5. (1.20).
CANOEING: Brit/Aquatonic Olympic Slalom Trials (Grandtully). It will be a nervous time in Scotland this weekend as there is no automatic selection to the British team. Spectating is free. Programme, tomorrow: GB squad practice (9.31-10.45am); 1996 Scottish squad first run (11.01-11.30am); GB first run (11.31am-12.45pm); Scottish second run (1.31-2pm); GB second run 2.01-3.15pm). Sunday: GB first run (9.31-10.45am); second run (11.31am-12.45pm). River Tay at Grandtully, five miles north-east of Aberfeldy, Tayside, on A827.
GYMNASTICS: British Sports Acrobatics Final (Milton Keynes). Sports Acrobatics is one of the most successful divisions within British gymnastics and this is the first final of the national development plan. More than 200 participants, made up of Regional squad or National B squad members and talented juniors, compete. Competition will comprise four work set to music. 10am tomorrow and 2.30pm on Sunday. Daily admission: £4 adults, £2 children. Bletchley Leisure Centre, Princes Way, Bletchley, Milton Keynes. (Tel. 01908 377251).
ICE HOCKEY: British Championship Play-offs (Wembley Arena). Tomorrow: semi-finals: Sheffield (holders) v Humberside (1.15); Durham v Nottingham (6.0). Sunday: Senior final (1.15). Seats in top corners of Arena only: tomorrow, £14 adults, £9 children under-12; Sunday: £24, £13. Box office: 0181 900 1234.
LAND YACHTING: British Championships (York). The fourth round will be held on a disused airfield near York and the concrete/tarmac surface can often bring about high speeds. Racing is from 10.30am tomorrow and Sunday. Spectating is free. Elvington Aerodrome is 10 miles south-east of York on B1228.
RALLYING: Granite City Rally (Aberdeen). The second round of the Mintex National Rally series sets off from the Exhibition and Conference Centre, Aberdeen at 8am tomorrow. Other spectator stages: Garty (two stages, with the first car at 9.45am and 2.36pm, from A96, head to Garty village and follow signs to Rescue House); Tienland (11.41am) off B9015, fives miles west of Keith; Ordiequish (12.14pm); north-east from A96 on unclassified road, two miles north of Keith, finish 14.30pm, as start).
SNOOKER: British Open (Plymouth). Three matches in the first round will be played tomorrow night from 7pm. Admission: £1. On Sunday, nine matches will be played from 10am. Admission £2. Plymouth Pavilions, Millbay Road. (Tel. 01752 229922)

SUNDAY

FOOTBALL: FA Cup semi-finals. Chelsea v Manchester United (1.30) (at Villa Park); Liverpool v Aston Villa (4.0) (at Old Trafford).

PICK OF THE DAY

SATURDAY / Rowing
Head of the River Race
Mortlake to Putney

The River Thames in London will be awash with rowers tomorrow when the Head of the River Race, the winter showpiece, gets under away. Starting at 1.15pm, the first of 420 eights from 242 British and European clubs sets out on the gruelling 4½-mile championship course from Mortlake to Putney. Stephen Redgrave and Matthew Pinsent, the Olympic Gold medallists, will be in the Leander I eight, which finished second last year and must start as favourites this time. Mortlake offers one of the best viewing points. Stand on the towpath at Chiswick Bridge and watch the crews being marshalled into their starting order, preparing to set off at 10-second intervals. The sheer numbers in this procession provide a spectacle. To check the identity of the crews, buy an official programme, on sale along the towpath.

Where to watch: Chiswick Bridge (Waterloo Network South West to Mortlake), Barnes Railway Bridge, Dukes Meadow at Chiswick, Hammersmith Bridge (Piccadilly or District line to Hammersmith Bridge), Bishop's Park, Fulham Park, Putney Bridge near the finish (Waterloo to Putney or District line to Putney Bridge).

RUGBY LEAGUE: Stones Super League: Bradford Bulls v Castleford (6.0); Leeds v Warrington (3.0); Workington Town v St Helens (3.0).
CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING: Double Rise English Open Championship (Nottingham). Competition starts at 8.30am and entrants will shoot 50 pairs of clays from four different layouts. Nottingham and Dist GC is nine miles north of Nottingham on A614, south of junction with A6097. (Tel: 0115 9273492).
DRAGON BOAT RACING: Colenorton Dragons Eton Races (Windsor). The Head and Tails will held from 10.30am, with crews racing from Windsor Bridge to Boveney Lock and back. After lunch, the highly-decorated boats will contest 250m and 500m races. Railway stations are at Windsor Central (London Paddington) and Windsor Riverside (London Waterloo).
EQUESTRIANISM: Dynes Hall Horse Trials (Halstead). The leading riders, including William Fox-Pitt and Mary King, will be competing as part of their preparation for Badminton. Dressage starts at 8am, show jumping at 9am and cross-country at 10am (advanced riders start at 2pm). Admission: £6 per car. Dynes Hall is one mile north-west of Halstead, Essex, and signposted off A604 Sible Hedingham road.
LACROSSE: Daily Telegraph Senior Flags Final: Mellor v Stockport (Didsbury). Both clubs won their league games impressively last week. The final starts at 2pm. Cricket Club, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, Manchester.
MOTORCYCLING: British Superbike Championship (Donington Park). Practice is from 9am, with the first race at 11am. (Practice/qualifying on Saturday is from 9am). Admission: £12 adults, accompanied children 15 and under free. (Saturday: £5, free). Donington Park, Castle Donington, Derby, is three miles from junctions 23A/24 of M1/M42/A42 (Tel: 01332 850955). Scottish Championship Meeting (Knockhill). Practice is from 9am, with racing at 1pm. Admission: £6 adults, children 12-16 £3, under-12s and parking free. Admission: Knockhill Circuit is five miles north-west of Dunfermline, Fife, on A823. (Tel: 01383 723337).

Next week

FOOTBALL (7.30 unless stated): Monday: Bell's Scottish League Premier Division: Celtic v Aberdeen (8.0). **Tuesday: Endsleigh Insurance League First Division:** Barnsley v Norwich (7.45); Birmingham v Portsmouth (7.45); Charlton v Leicester (7.45); Crystal Palace v Port Vale (7.45); Huddersfield v Reading; Ipswich v Derby (7.45); Oldham v Grimsby (7.45); Sheffield Utd v Southend (7.45); Tranmere v Millwall; Watford v Sunderland (7.45); West Bromwich v Luton. **Second Division:** Brentford v Stockport (7.45); Bristol Rovers v Bradford; Burnley v Bournemouth; Carlisle v Crewe (7.45); Chesterfield v Blackpool; Hull v Bristol City; Oxford Utd v Wrexham (7.45); Rotherham v Notts County; Swansea v Peterborough; Walsall v Wycombe (7.45); York v Shrewsbury. **Third Division:** Barnet v Cardiff (7.45); Bury v Fulham; Cambridge Utd v Northampton (7.45); Chester v Leyton Orient (7.30); Colchester v Rochdale (7.45); Gillingham v Darlington (7.45); Hereford v Doncaster; Lincoln v Scarborough; Plymouth v Mansfield (7.45); Preston v Torquay; Scunthorpe v Hartlepool; Wigan v Exeter (7.45). **Representative Match:** League of Ireland v League of Wales (7.45) (at St Colman's Park, Cobh, Co Cork). **Semi-Professional International:** England v The Netherlands (7.45) (at Rushden and Diamonds FC). **GM Vauxhall Conference:** Northwich v Gateshead (7.45); Telford v Hednesford (7.45). **Wednesday: FA Carling Premiership:** Leeds v Southampton (7.45); Liverpool v Newcastle (8.0). **Endsleigh Insurance League First Division:** Stoke v Wolverhampton (7.45). **Second Division:** Swindon v Brighton (7.45). **GM Vauxhall Conference:** Bath v Slough (7.45). **Spalding Cup semi-final second leg:** Macclesfield (4) v Southport (4) (7.45). **Thursday: Spalding Cup semi-final second leg:** Kettering (0) v Bromsgrove (2) (7.45). **Friday: FA Carling Premiership:** Middlesbrough v Sheffield Wednesday (5.45). **Endsleigh Insurance League First Division:** Charlton v Luton (2.15).
RUGBY LEAGUE: Thursday: Stones Super League: London v Paris (7.05) (at Charlton Ath FC). **Friday: Stones Super League:** Castleford v Leeds (6.0); Oldham v Halifax (3.0); Sheffield v Bradford (7.30); St Helens v Wigan (3.30); Warrington v Workington (3.0). **First Division:** Dewsbury v Batley (3.0); Rochdale v Keighley (7.30); Salford v Widnes (3.0); Wakefield v Featherstone (7.30); Whitehaven v Huddersfield (3.30). **Second Division:** Barrow v Carlisle (7.30); Chorley v Doncaster (3.0); Hunslet v Bramley (7.30); Leigh v Swinton (3.0); Prescot v South Wales (7.30); York v Hull KR (3.15).
RUGBY UNION: Tuesday: Hart Gilmore Four Counties Championship Final: Gtr Birmingham v Worcester/Hereford (7.30) (at Moseley). **Wednesday: Heineken Welsh League First Division:** Abertillery v Llanelli (7.0); Neath v Aberavon (7.0). **Club Match:** Cwmbran v Pontypool (7.0). **Thursday: European Cup play-off:** Glasgow v North/Midlands (7.0) (at Meggetland). **Friday: Club Matches:** Camborne v St Ives (3.0); Redruth v St Mary's Hospital (3.0).
RACING (Flat meetings in capitals): Monday: SOUTHWELL (All Weather): Club £12. Tattersalls £6 (OAP members of course's Diamond Club £4, accompanied under-16s free). (First race 2.20). **Exeter:** Grandstand and Paddock £9; Silver Ring £4.50 (accompanied under-16s free). (2.10). **Kelso:** Club £10; Tattersalls £7 (OAPs £4, accompanied under-16s free). (2.0). **Tuesday: NOTTINGHAM:** Club £12 (Juniors, 16-21 years, £8); Tattersalls £8, Silver Ring and Paddock £4. (2.0). **WOLVERHAMPTON (AW):** Club £15; Tattersalls £6 (OAP members of Diamond Club £4); Viewing Restaurant £25.90 including entrance and meal. (2.20). **Folkestone:** Club £12 (under-16s free); Tattersalls £8.50; Course Enclosure £4, plus £4 for each occupant. (2.10). **Wednesday: HAMILTON:** Club £12; Grandstand and Paddock £7 (£4 for OAPs, disabled and students, £10 for couples), accompanied under-16s free all enclosures. (2.25). **Ascot:** Members £12 (Junior Members 16-25 years, half price); Grandstand and Paddock £8; Silver Ring £5. (1.55). **Ludlow:** Club £14 (accompanied under-16s free); Tattersalls £9; Course £5. (2.15). **Thursday: MUSSELBURGH:** Club £11; Tattersalls £6 (OAPs and unemployed £3). (2.20). **LEICESTER:** Club £12; Tattersalls £8; Silver Ring £4. (accompanied under-16s free). (2.10). **LINGFIELD (AW Flat and National Hunt):** Members £13, Tattersalls £9; Silver Ring £5. (2.0). **Friday:** no racing.

NEXT WEEKEND

FOOTBALL: Saturday: FA Carling Premiership, Endsleigh Insurance League and Bell's Scottish League. **Sunday:** Scottish FA Cup semi-final: Celtic v Rangers (4.0) (at Hampden Park).
RUGBY UNION: Saturday: Representative Match: Cardiff v Barbarians (2.30). Courage Clubs' Championship, Heineken Welsh League, Insurance Corporation Irish League.
RACING: Saturday: HAYDOCK: County Stand £15; Tattersalls £9; Newton Stand £4 (OAPs half-price in Tattersalls and Newton Stand). (1.30). **KEMPTON:** Club £15, Juniors (16 to 25-year-olds) £12; Grandstand £10; Silver Ring £5. (1.45). **Carlisle:** Club £12 (OAPs and under-21s £9); Tattersalls £6 (OAPs and under-21s £3). (2.05). **Newton Abbot:** Tattersalls £8.50; Course £4. Accompanied under-16s free. (1.40). **Plumpton:** Members £12; Tattersalls £8; Course £4. (2.25). **Towcester:** Members £12; Tattersalls £8; Course £4 (Car plus all occupants £15). (2.20).

Plan ahead

For Bruce Davidson, the first American to win the tough Badminton three-day event last year, it was an ambition fulfilled, his victory gained at the 10th attempt. This year the excitement will be just as keen when the first of Britain's top-rated international horse trials is held from 2 to 5 May on the Duke of Beaufort's estate, Avon.

The cross-country on Saturday attracts the largest crowd and spectators can walk all or part of the 4½-mile course, though for a closer inspection of the fences, visitors can walk the course on Friday, along with the riders.

Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials, Badminton, Avon, 2-5 May.
Duke of Beaufort's Estate is 4½ miles north-east of junction 18, M4. Admission: Thursday-Friday (dressage): £10 per car and driver, £4 per additional person (Gates open at 8am, competition starts at 9am). Saturday (cross-country): £14 per car and driver, £3 per additional person (gates 7am, endurance test 10.30am with first rider on cross-country at 11.45am). Sunday (show jumping): as Thursday/Friday (8am, jumping test starts at 11.45am if number of competitors exceeds 20; if fewer, 2.45pm). Discount of £1 per additional person ticket if booked in advance. Season ticket: £30 per car and driver, £15 per additional person (not available at gate). Grandstand seats: Thursday: £4-£12; seats with headphone commentary: £6-£16. Friday: £4-£14; headphone commentary sold out. Sunday: £5-£8. Caravan/Camping site (includes two personal passes): £75. Cross-country course walk tape (commentary by Hughes Thomas, designer of course and Lucinda Green, leading event rider): £5. Advance booking closes for car passes and personal admission on 17 April (cheques) and 24 April (credit cards); Grandstands, 19 April and 26 April.
Train travel on Saturday (from London): 07.30 from Paddington, arrive Chippenham 08.55 or 08.30, arrive 09.55. Fosseway bus service provides connection to Badminton village hall; short walk to course where ground admission is £8 per head. The bus service is free. Train bookings to Great Western Trains Ltd on 0171 312 1950. Apex fare (must be booked a minimum of seven days in advance pending availability): £17.50 return. Coach service from London on Saturday provided by Mrs Verity Baker for £28. Ground admission extra. Tel: 0171 351 4434.

Details of forthcoming events with information on tickets and venues should be sent to: The Sports Desk, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. Fax: 0171 293 2894.

Compiled by Paul Maher

RACING RESULTS

AINTREE

2.00: 1. TRAGIC HERO (J Lower) 20-1; 2. Charming Girl 14-1; 3. Castle Sweep 7-2. 15 ran. 3-1 fav Kimanicky (4th). 4, 1¼. (M Pipe, Wellington). Tote: £37.20; £6.40, £3.20, £1.60. DF: £167.90. CSF: £251.39. Trio: £385.00.

3.10: 1. ASK TOM (P Niven) 10-1; 2. Lord Dorcet 7-1; 3. Cable Beach 11-2. 10 ran. 3-1 fav Manhattan Castle (4th). 15, 2½. (T Tate, Tadcaster). Tote: £10.00; £2.50, £2.00, £1.20. DF: £23.10. CSF: £68.91. Trio: £109.80. NR: Captain Khedive.

2.35: 1. SCOTTON BANKS (L Wyer) 9-2; 2. Barton Bank 9-2; 3. Unguided Missile 7-2. 6 ran. 9-4 fav Couldnt Be Better (pulled up). 15, 7. (T Easterby, Malton). Tote: £5.10; £3.20, £2.10. DF: £14.20. CSF: £21.85.

4.20: 1. ZABADI (A P McCoy) 8-1; 2. Our Kris 13-2; 3. Dancing 18-1. 11 ran. 3-1 fav Debutante Days. 6, 1. (D Nicholson, Temple Guiting). Tote: £11.40; £2.70, £1.70, £4.00. DF: £28.30. CSF: £54.83. Trio: £172.00. NR: Escarrefigue.

3.45: 1. JOE WHITE (P Carberry) 33-1; 2. Go Universal 9-1; 3. Mugoni Beach 33-1; 4. Straight Talk 16-1. 21 ran. 7-1 fav Tourisen Prince. Hd, nk. (J H Johnson, Crook). Tote: £52.40; £7.70, £1.90, £8.70, £4.10. DF: £301.30. CSF: £284.42. Tricast: £8,743.90. Trio: £3,398.20.

4.50: 1. WUDIMP (Mr C Storey) 15-8 fav; 2. Colonial Kelly 7-2; 3. Bally Pilot 9-1. 9 ran. 4, 1. (Mrs J Storey, Kelso). Tote: £2.60; £1.80, £2.00, £2.30. DF: £3.90. CSF: £8.61. Trio: £18.40.

5.20: 1. TOP SPIN (A P McCoy) 20-1; 2. Jethro 7-1 jt fav; 3. Uncle Keeny 14-1; 4. Amble Speedy 14-1. 19 ran. 7-1 jt fav Treasure Again. Nk, 2½. (J Jenkins, Royston). Tote: £25.80; £4.90, £1.90, £3.20, £2.60. DF: £59.30. CSF: £153.09. Tricast: £1,902.44. Trio: £1,899.20.

Jackpot: Not won. Pool of £18,676.49 carried forward to Aintree today.

Placepot: £762.00. Quadpot: £111.80. Place 6: £1,181.12. Place 5: £342.77.

LEICESTER

2.25: 1. IECHYD-DA (M Fenton) 5-1; 2. Irish Fiction 6-4 fav; 3. Swino 12-1. 7 ran. ¾, sh hd. (M Bell, Newmarket). Tote: £6.80; £3.60, £1.20. DF: £17.20.

2.55: 1. ANASTINA (J Weaver) 9-4; 2. It's Academic 100-30; 3. Ballard Lady 20-1. 7 ran. 15-8 fav Queen Of All Birds (6th). 7, 3½. (N Graham, Newmarket). Tote: £2.60; £1.70, £1.60. DF: £6.90. CSF: £10.39.

3.30: 1. THE FRISKY FARMER (A Clark) 2-1 co fav; 2. Dungeon Princess 2-1 co fav; 3. Quinntessa 11-2. 4 ran. 2-1 co fav Sharp Monty (4th). 1½, ¾. (W Turner, Sherborne). Tote: £2.10. DF: £1.90. CSF: £6.35.

4.05: 1. WEETMAN'S WEIGH (L Detton) 5-2 fav; 2. Golden Pond 7-2; 3. White Plains 3-1. 5 ran. Nk, 6. (R Hollinshead, Upper Longdon). Tote: £2.70; £1.70, £1.20. DF: £3.90. CSF: £10.76.

4.40: 1. INFAMOUS (T Quinn) 11-4; 2. Sharaf 8-5 fav; 3. A Likely Tale 3-1. 5 ran. ½, 3. (P Cole, Whatcombe). Tote: £3.80; £2.90, £1.80. DF: £2.40. CSF: £5.90.

5.10: 1. MAIDEN CASTLE (L Detton) 8-11 fav; 2. Orchestra Stall 4-1; 3. Hasbitooh 10-1. 9 ran. 10, 12. (J Gosden, Newmarket). Tote: £1.70; £1.10, £1.60, £5.00. DF: £2.10. CSF: £4.30. Trio: £6.30.

5.40: 1. SCHARNHORST (A Daly) 20-1; 2. Duello 12-1; 3. Sycamore Lodge 6-4 fav. 12 ran. ½, 1½. (S Dow, Epsom). Tote: £33.30; £6.10, £1.60, £1.10. DF: £80.40. CSF: £219.56. Tricast: £541.35. Trio: £77.00.

Placepot: £14.20. Quadpot: £5.50. Place 6: £20.28. Place 5: £12.00.

TAUNTON

2.15: 1. CHAI-YO (G Upton) 2-5 fav; 2. Laura Lye 12-1; 3. Bowles Patrol 17-2. 3 ran. 3, 20. (J Old). Tote: £1.30; £1.20, £2.60. £1.30. DF: £4.50. CSF: £6.35.

2.45: 1. JURZ (T Dascombe) 5-2 fav; 2. Aal El Aal 3-1; 3. Rose Garden 20-1. 9 ran. 25, 9. (R Hodges). Tote: £2.90; £1.10, £1.50, £3.90. DF: £4.60. CSF: £9.88. Trio: £53.80.

3.20: 1. COURT MELODY (P Hide) 6-4 fav; 2. Certain Angle 4-1; 3. Benstown Bill 11-1. 6 ran. 9, 3. (P Nicholls). Tote: £2.40; £1.50, £2.00. DF: £11.00. CSF: £7.46.

3.55: 1. ITS GRAND (S Fox) 7-2 fav; 2. Rising's Lass 10-1; 3. Daves Delight 9-1; 4. Free Dancer 20-1. 16 ran. Nk, 14. (J M Bradley). Tote: £3.70; £1.10, £1.50, £2.10, £5.70. DF: £17.10. CSF: £38.46. Tricast: £281.01. Trio: £129.60.

4.30: 1. ON ALERT (Mr Richard White) 8-1; 2. Golden Freeze 20-1; 3. Expressment 11-1. 13 ran. 7-4 fav Loyal Note. 14, 1¾. (V Greenway). Tote: £18.90; £3.60, £7.60, £5.30. DF: £141.30. CSF: £161.46. NR: Sausalito Boy. Trio: £159.40.

5.00: 1. PERSISTENT GUNNER (T Descombe) 13-2; 2. Jemima Puddleduck 5-2; 3. Out Ranking 9-4 fav. 7 ran. 3, 5. (R Hodges). Tote: £6.70; £2.20, £2.00. DF: £9.60. CSF: £21.94.

5.30: 1. MARKSMAN SPARKS (S Burrough) 9-4; 2. Berrieters Boy 4-5 fav; 3. The Cheese Baron 9-1. 8 ran. 3½, 21. (Dr D Chesney). Tote: £4.60; £1.80, £1.10, £1.10. DF: £3.60. CSF: £4.82.

Placepot: £275.90. Quadpot: £119.40. Place 6: £128.88. Place 5: £105.37.

LINGFIELD

HYPERION

2.20 El Volador 2.55 No Submission 3.30 Stand Tall 4.05 Montone 4.40 State Circus 5.10 Domoor

GOING: Standard.

STALLS: 5f and 1m – outside; remainder inside.

DRAW ADVANTAGE: Low numbers are best in sprints.

■ Equitrack surface; Left-hand, sharp undulating course.
■ Racecourse is south-east of town on B2028 Edenbridge road. Lingfield railway station (served by London Victoria) adjoins course.
ADMISSION: Members £13, Tattersalls £9; Silver Ring £5. CAR PARK: Club £3; remainder free.

SIS RACING CHANNEL

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Victory Team (4.05) won Ling 27 March.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Stand Tall (3.30) sent 270 miles from C W Thornton's Middleham stable in North Yorkshire; Domoor (5.10) sent 270 miles from M Johnston's Middleham stable in North Yorkshire.

2.20 COLD AS CHARITY CLAIMING STAKES (CLASS F) £3,450 added 1m 4f

1	14-3121	EL VOLADOR (15) (CD) C Allen 9 9 6	M Henry (5) 4
2	052116	SWEET SUPPOSIN (27) (C) C Dwyer 5 9 6	L Dettori 2
3	00	MYSTIC LEGEND (15) T J Naughton 4 9 4	D Harrison 3
4	211231	MASNUN (USA) (31) (C) R O'Sullivan 11 6 10	A Clark 5
5	3010-20	GUEST ALLIANCE (34) (C) A Moore 4 6 6	Candy Morris 1

– 5 declared –

BETTING: 13-8 El Volador, 13-8 Masnun, 9-4 Sweet Supposin, 10-1 Guest Alliance, 50-1 Mystic Legend

2.55 APPLE A DAY SELLING STAKES (CLASS G) £3,000 added 1m 2f

1	012-603	AWESOME POWER (36) (CD) J Hills 10 9 4	A Clark 8
2	302120	NO SUBMISSION (3) (C) (S) D Chapman 10 9 4	A Culhane 9
3	01-3042	TOTAL RACH (38) (CD) (BF) R Ingram 4 6 13	W Woods 7
4	2003-63	JEBI (USA) (31) C Murray 5 6 12	M Tebbutt 5
5	000-000	KENTAVRUS WAY (31) (CD) A Moore 5 8 12	Candy Morris 12
6	236125	NORTHERN TRIAL (23) K Burke 5 8 12	T Ashley (7) 10
7	14/3046-	OUR EDDIE (370) (CD) B Gubby 7 8 12	T Quinn 6
8	0140-00	ROCKVILLE PIKE (7) S Dow 4 6 12	J Quinn 3
9	040-040	THE CAPE DOCTOR (29) A Foster 4 8 12	A Whelan (3) 1
10	303520	NIVASHA (15) R Hoad 4 8 7	M Fenton 4
11	5/4500-0	TANDRIDGE (15) J Jenkins 4 8 7	J Fortune 2
12	00-005-	THORNTRAMIA (6) J Bridger 5 8 7	A Daly (5) 11

– 12 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 No Submission, 7-2 Northern Trial, 4-1 Total Rach, 5-1 Our Eddie, 8-1 Jebi, Awesome Power, 14-1 others

3.30 SPINAL INJURIES ASSOCIATION HANDICAP (CLASS C) £7,650 added 5f

1	0-03031	SPENDER (15) (CD) P Harris 7 10 0	J Stack (3) 1
2	1-31211	STAND TALL (27) (C) C Thornton 4 9 5	Dean McKeown 5
3	31-1213	BERGE (34) W O Gorman 5 9 1	Emma O'Gorman 4
4	003422	LORD SKY (6) (D) (BF) A Bailey 5 8 7	Angela Gallimore (7) 3
5	30-0635	KALAR (28) (CD) D Chapman 7 8 4	P Fessey (5) 6
6	000813	TENOR (29) (CD) D Nicholls 5 8 2	F Norton 2

– 6 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Stand Tall, 7-2 Spender, Berge, Lord Sky, 7-1 Tenor, Kalar

4.05 LIGHTWEIGHT PLASTERING HANDICAP (CLASS F) £3,450 added 1m

1	0306-21	VICTORY TEAM (2) G Balding 4 10 5 (5ex)	A Clark 11
2	136040	LABUDD (USA) (2) (CD) R Ingram 6 9 4	W Woods 10
3	05-1432	NATTA SUNSHINE (15) (CD) (BF) 4 Moore 6 9 3	Joan Wands (7) 6
4	55/-5415	SARUM (2) (CD) C Wildman 10 8 3	C Rutter 9
5	0-22015	LILAC RAIN (14) (CD) J Arnold 4 8 10	J Quinn 6
6	405035	MONTONE (15) J Jenkins 8 6 10	J Fortune 2
7	051-403	LITTLE SCARLETT (34) (D) P Mitchell 4 8 10	S Sanders 12
8	6-05544	EASTLEIGH (15) (CD) R Hollinshead 7 8 10	L Dettori 7
9	000-034	TOP PET (14) R Akehurst 6 8 9	T Quinn 3
10	400-401	CALL TOPHORSE (34) (CD) C Murray 4 8 9	M Tebbutt 4
11	46-3300	ZAHRAN (15) (CD) J M Bradley 5 8 4	S Drowne (3) 5
12	32006-0	MOVING UP (87) G L Moore 3 8 1	N Adams 1

– 12 declared –

BETTING: 4-1 Sarum, 5-1 Natta Sunshine, 11-2 Victory Team, 7-1 Labudd, Little Scarlett, 8-1 Call Tophorse, 10-1 Montone, 12-1 others

4.40 SPINAL INJURIES ASSOCIATION MAIDEN STAKES (CLASS D) £5,100 added 1m 2f

1	502224-	CAROL'S DREAM (USA) (223) J Hills 4 8 10	T Quinn 8
2	40/	DENOMINATION (USA) (525) I Balding 4 9 10	J Weaver 4
3	3/	SOVIET SHORE (581) D Loder 4 9 10	L Dettori 7
4	200-403	KELLANE GIRL (38) A Moore 4 8 5	A Whelan (3) 1
5	26	RUBBIYATI (23) C Brittain 4 8 5	D Harrison 8
6	0-02042	LORD ELLANGOWAN (29) R Ingram 3 8 4	W Woods 3
7	32500-0	TWO SOCKS (30) M McCormack 3 8 4	A Clark 9
8	44	NELLY'S COUSIN (12) N Callaghan 3 7 13	– 5
9	00	P GRAYCO CHOICE (15) P Clarke 3 7 13	M Adams 10
10	2	STATE CIRCUS (23) Lord Huntingdon 3 7 13	M Henry (5) 2

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 State Circus, 5-2 Soviet Shore, 3-1 Carol's Dream, 6-1 Denomination, 10-1 Lord Ellangowan, 12-1 Rubbiyati, 16-1 others

5.10 BALD COOT HANDICAP (CLASS D) £5,100 added 3YO 7f

1	03-3323	MYTTONS MISTAKE (34) (D) A Bailey 9 7	D Wright (3) 4
2	5-62123	MOI CANARD (36) (CD) B Pearce 9 4	L Dettori 2
3	5252	BARANOV (IRE) (27) (BF) D Murray Smith 9 0	T Quinn 6
4	522162	DOMOOR (6) (C) (D) M Johnston 8 8	J Weaver 3
5	52436-5	IVORY'S GRAB HIRE (4) K Ivory 8 3	J Stack (3) 5
6	20300-3	ARLINGTON LADY (2) N Callaghan 7 10	1

– 6 declared –

Minimum weight: 7st 10lb. True handicap weight: Arlington Lady 7st 3lb.
BETTING: 5-2 Baranov, 3-1 Domoor, 7-2 Myttons Mistake, 4-1 Moi Canard, 5-1 Ivory's Grab Hire, 20-1 Arlington Lady

GRAND NATIONAL MEETING: Novice victory gives trainer swift compensation after big-race fancy Lo Stregone is sidelined

Ask Tom wipes away Tate's tears

GREG WOOD

reports *from Aintree*

As any punter knows, as long as a *single penny* remains in your pocket, there is hope, so swiftly can your fortunes ebb and flow. Tom Tate knows it too, after a day which started with the trainer close to tears, and by mid-afternoon had seen him secure one of the most valuable *successes of his* career.

It was early yesterday morning when a suspicion which had been growing in Tate's mind for 24 hours was finally confirmed. Lo Stregone, second-favourite for tomorrow's Grand National, had finally caught the equine 'flu which had passed through every other horse in the yard during the course of the season. "He had a temperature of 103 last night and again this morning and he is a sick horse," Tate said before setting off for Aintree. "It's a bit of an anti-climax to say the least, *and I could* cry."

But just a few hours later, fortune shifted straight through the gears *from reverse into* fifth. Ask Tom started at 10-1 for the Maghull Novices' Chase after a poor run at Cheltenham two weeks ago, but Tate had long been convinced that his horse was a potential champion and his faith was conclusively rewarded with a 15-length defeat of Lord Dorcet.

"He had the same virus that Lo Stregone has got about four weeks before Cheltenham," Tate said, "and while he was over it by then, it often takes a race to put them right again.

"When I bought the horse he was already named. I rang Brian Stewart-Brown and said I'd found a good one. He asked what it was called and when I told him he laughed and said 'we'd better have it then'."

The winning jockey on Ask Tom was Peter Niven, a late replacement for Jamie Osborne, who had broken his collar-bone in a fall from Black Humour in the previous race, the Martell Cup. The winner of this race too had performed poorly in his most recent outing, but yesterday Scotton Banks not only returned to form, but appeared capable of a serious challenge for next year's Gold Cup.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Morgans Harbour
(Aintree 5.20)
NB: Pharanear
(Aintree 4.20)

For much of the contest, Scotton Banks was engaged in a private duel with Barton Bank, which ended only when the latter made one of his trademark mistakes at the final fence.

"Both times we went down the back he was dossing a bit," Lorcan Wyer, Scotton Banks's jockey, said, "and the second time I didn't think we would win. But Barton Bank missed the fourth-last and that let me get back into contention. It's very early to be talking about the Gold Cup, but if all goes well next season we could end up *there with a chance.*"

Barton Bank's jockey yesterday was Tony McCoy, whose exceptional adhesive qualities were demonstrated several times during the afternoon. His strength in a finish was in evidence too, when he brought Top Spin in to win on the nod in the final race, a success which completed a double after his victory on Zabadi in the juvenile hurdle.

Even so, the riding performance of the day was that of Paul Carberry, who put several unfortunate experiences over the National fences behind him *to take the John Hughes Chase* on Joe White, a 33-1 chance.

Perhaps inevitably, Carberry has rarely been mentioned in his career to date without reference to his father, Tommy, a National winner on L'Escargot. Carberry junior, though, is now a very *fine rider himself*, and his assurance on Joe White, as the winning post accelerated towards him with Go Universal still in front, was magnificent.

"I thought I'd definitely beat them as soon as we'd jumped the last," Carberry said afterwards, "it just took me a little longer than I thought to do it." The jockey is due to partner Three Brownies, a rank outsider, in the National tomorrow, but may miss the ride after his own run of luck came to a sudden halt. He sprained a knee when hampered and brought *down on Edelweis Du Moulin* in the next race, and must pass the doctor this morning if he is to ride in the afternoon.

It is the amateurs' turn over the big fences today in the Fox Hunters' Chase, but as ever this is a hopeless event for punters. Concentrate *instead* on the preceding events, in which **Klairon Davis** (2.35), **Hill Of Tullow** (next best 3.10) and **ALLTIME DANCER** (nap 2.00) in particular must go well.

AINTREE

2.35: SOUND MAN, a slightly disappointing 6¼ lengths third to **Klairon Davis and Viking Flagship** with **Coulton** – capable of running well at a big price on this ground – way back in sixth *in the two-mile* Queen Mother Champion Chase at *the Cheltenham Festival*, will relish the return to two and a half miles *this afternoon and goes well on* good ground. The selection was most impressive when scoring at Ascot (twice) and Sandown earlier in the season and looks the best chaser around at this distance.

☐☐☐

3.10: ADDINGTON BOY, who put in a superb performance for a *novice when landing the Great* Yorkshire Handicap Chase at Doncaster last time out, *may be better suited by the drying ground than likely market leader* **Hill Of Tullow** or **Jibber The Kibber. Avro Anson** will also go on the surface but his jumping was far from fluent at Doncaster recently and this former top class staying hurdler will be tested to the full by the tricky Mildmay *fences.* **Linden's Lotto** and **Golden Spinner** both disappointed last *time while* **Act The Wag** faces his toughest task to date.

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

3.45: KERRY ORCHID, second in the Foxhunters Chase at Cheltenham as a five-year-old in 1993, ran possibly his best race since when *far from disgraced in finishing 13* lengths third to Elegant Lord and Cool Dawn in *the same race re*cently. He would prefer further, but *is a sound jumper. Last year's win*ner **Sheer Jest** fell at Doncaster last time while the veterans **Dark Dawn**, **Brown Windsor** and **On The Other Hand** have seen better days. **Rolling Ball** was impressive at Warwick but has more to do here.

☐☐☐

4.20: TURNPOLE, most impressive in a Newcastle handicap hurdle over two and a half miles last time, has scope for further improvement, should stay this longer trip and can retain his unbeaten record. **Pharanear**, who came back to his best at Cheltenham, looks the danger.

Champion supports National underdogs

Bob Champion, winner of an emotion-packed Grand National on Aldaniti 15 years ago, believes that the conditions that now apply to runners in the *race are reducing the spectacle* of the world's most famous steeplechase.

Speaking at Aintree yesterday, Champion said: "It's such a shame that there will be so few runners this year because I think that this detracts from the spectacle the race provides for the public."

Barring further mishap or injury, 28 runners will line up in tomorrow's race – the smallest since Gay Trip beat 27 others in 1970. Champion believes that figure would be boosted if it were not for the restrictive race conditions.

"A handicap limit of 120 is far too low. There should be no limit and then they would ballot *them out from the bottom of the* handicap – that would get rid of the no hopers," the former jockey, now a trainer, said.

"Killeshin would have been one of the favourites for the race and was a good winner of the Eider, yet he can't get into the race. It should be just an open *handicap," he added.*

Despite the withdrawal of Lo Stregone yesterday, Rough Quest, *the favourite*, actually eased in the market with the major bookmakers. He is now a top-priced 11-2, from 5-1, with William Hill. That firm now has Superior Finish as the 11-2 joint-favourite, from 7-1 and report a flood of money for that Jenny Pitman-trained horse since Richard Dunwoody was booked for the ride.

■ The crowd at yesterday's opening day of the Grand National meeting was 13,374, down 814 on last year's record first day *attendance.*

Roscoe Harvey dies at 92

Brigadier Roscoe Harvey DSO, one of the most popular post-war figures in National Hunt racing, died early yesterday *morning* at his Gloucestershire home, aged 95.

He rode as an amateur in Britain between 1923 and 1926 and in Egypt and India until the end of the World War II, when he became a stewards' secretary, a role he filled for 23 years. After his retirement he became an owner with David Nicholson and enjoyed many big-race successes with Burnt Oak and Relkeel.

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AINTREE

HYPERION
2.00 Simply Dashing
2.35 Sound Man (nb)
3.10 ADDINGTON BOY (nap)
3.45 Kerry Orchid
4.20 Turnpole
4.50 Golden Hello
5.20 Morgans Harbour

GOING: Good (all courses).

■ *Two left-hand courses. Grand National circuit is 2.25 miles and triangular with a run-in of almost 500yds. Massive spruce and fir fences, several with a steep drop on the landing side. Mildmay circuit is 1.25 miles round with conventional 'park' fences.*

■ Racecourse is north-east of city, one mile from the M57 on the A59. Aintree railway station (served by Liverpool, Lime St) adjoins the course. ADMISSION: County Aintree Roof £20; County Stand Roof or reserved seat £20; Queen Mother Stand Roof or reserved seat £20; Glenlivet Stand £17; County Lawn £15; Tattersalls £9. CAR PARK: County £15; Central £5.

SIS

■ LEADING TRAINERS WITH RUNNERS: D Nicholson – 9 winners from 50 runners gives a success ratio of 18.0% and a profit to a £1 level stake of £11.50; N Twiston-Davies – 8 winners, 40 runners, 20.0%, +£0.88; K Bailey – 7 winners, 24 runners, 29.2%, -£1.28; M Pipe – 7 winners, 61 runners, 11.5%, -£16.50.

■ LEADING JOCKEYS: R Dunwoody – 10 wins, 61 rides, 16.4%, +£15.24; N Williamson – 7 wins, 36 rides, 19.4%, -£4.03; G Bradley – 6 wins, 24 rides, 25.0%, +£2.38; J Osborne – 5 wins, 33 rides, 15.2%, -£5.80.

WINNERS IN LAST SEVEN DAYS: None. LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS (BRITISH STABLES): Off The Bru (3.45) has been sent 229 miles by Mrs S Bradburne from Ladybank, Fife; Rich Life (4.50) sent 227 miles by C Weedon from Chiddingfold, Surrey.

2.00 MARTELL MERSEY NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS A) (Grade 2) £20,000 added 2m 4f

1 3111 INDEFENCE (17) (Indef Limited) Mrs J Pitman 5 11 11 ....W Marston
2 111111 SIMPLY DASHING (41) (CD) (Steve Hammond) T Easterby 5 11 7 ....L Wyer
3 5-0F105 ASHWELL BOY (17) (A B S Racing) P Hobbs 5 11 3 ....R Dunwoody
4 401320 DJAIS (FR) (36) (D) (T Long) J Jenkins 7 11 3 ....G Bradley
5 5421 HOODED HAWK (42) (D) (C M Hamer) N Henderson 5 11 3 ....M A Fitzgerald
6 0-23124 JACK TANNER (16) (Lady Harris) O Nicholson 7 11 3 ....A P McCoy
7 4-21314 TOM BRODIE (34) (BF) (Mrs M W Bird) J H Johnson 6 11 3 ....P Carberry
8 515314 ESCARTEFIGUE (FR) (15) (Darren C Mercer) M Pipe 4 11 2 ....D Bridgwater
9 14-2310 SILVER SHRED (17) (D M Beresford) M Pipe 5 10 12 ....J Lower
10 131411 ALLTIME DANCER (24) (H M Heyman) O Sherwood 4 10 8 ....J A McCarthy
11 00315 NORTHERN CHARMER (48) (The Bibby Halliday Partnership) E Alston 4 10 8 ....P Niven
12 60 STREAKY HAWK (USA) (17) (P Cunningham) J Pearce 4 10 8 ....J McLaughlin
– 12 declared –

BETTING: 100-30 Indefence, 7-2 Simply Dashing, 11-2 Jack Tanner, 6-1 Alltime Dancer, 8-1 Escartefigue, 10-1 Hooded Hawk, 12-1 Silver Shred, 16-1 others

1995: Tervel 4 10 8 C Swan 4-1 (J Pearce) 10 ran

FORM GUIDE

Martin Pipe won here yesterday with Cheltenham failure Tragic Hero, so there has to be hope for **ESCARTEFIGUE** following this four-year-old's Triumph Hurdle fourth to Paddy's Return. He got back into the argument after some sloppy jumping but was finally beaten 14 lengths into fourth. *Highly impressive at Lingfield beforehand, he has the faster ground to overcome,* but this longer trip is ideal. **Indefence** has it to do under a penalty for his Supreme Novices' *success from Kimanicky and Castle Sweep. Pipe's horse Tragic Hero beat those placed horses here yesterday so improvement could also come from* **Ashwell Boy**, another also-ran in *that Festival race. Regarded more as a pace horse rather than a mud-slogger,* Ashwell Boy could take off on this ground today and has an extra half-mile, plus an 8lb pull, to help in his bid to make up the 17-length deficit with Indefence. **Simply Dashing** missed Cheltenham but he has already beaten **Jack Tanner** when conceding 9lb so can be fancied to beat that rival again at a difference of only 4lb. A course winner in November on fast ground, Simply Dashing may again have the speed to beat Jack Tanner, who looked short of pace when fourth to Urubande at the Festival. **Alltime Dancer** has won weakish races but the sharp track looks made for him, while **Hooded Hawk** could still be anything after cruising home from poor rivals at Fakenham. The trip and ground will suit the well-regarded **Tom Brodie**, while Escartefigue's stablemate **Silver Shred** came late on the scene to be seventh to Indefence at Cheltenham. **Selection:** ESCARTEFIQUE

2.35 MUMM MELLING CHASE (CLASS A) (Grade 1) £75,000 added 2m 4f (Mildmay course) BBC2

1 10F0F6 COULTON (18) (CD) (M G St Quinton) O Sherwood 9 11 10 ....J A McCarthy
2 4-1FU21 KLAIRON DAVIS (FR) (18) (C Jones) A Moore (Ir) 7 11 10 ....F Woods
3 111113 SOUND MAN (18) (D) (BF) (David Lloyd) E O'Grady (Ir) 8 11 10 ....R Dunwoody
4 1-43112 VIKING FLAGSHIP (18) (CD) (Roach Foods Limited) D Nicholson 9 11 10 ....A P McCoy
– 4 declared –

BETTING: 13-8 Sound Man, 7-4 Klairon Davis, 9-4 Viking Flagship, 16-1 Coulton.

1995: Viking Flagship 8 11 10 A Maguire 5-2 (D Nicholson) 6 ran

FORM GUIDE

The winner of the two-mile Champion Chase at Cheltenham has a good record in this event and **KLAIRON DAVIS** could just be the value bet today even if all his wins have been in the *mud. The Arkle winner from* **Sound Man** *the previous season, Klairon Davis outstayed* **Viking Flagship** for a five-length win 16 days ago with Sound Man a further length back in third and **Coulton** *always trailing in the rear. Coulton is far from being a no-hoper after that con*fidence booster following two falls. He will love the fast ground and runs here instead of *trying to repeat his handicap win in the two-miler at this fixture 12 months ago.* The way Klairon Davis won at Cheltenham suggests he'll relish this longer journey and Sound Man and Viking Flagship will have to jump better than at Cheltenham to beat him. Viking Flagship confirmed Cheltenham form with Deep Sensation in typically game fashion in this last year. His jumping at Cheltenham let him down this year with costly errors at two of the final three fences, and this ground could prove too fast for him. The sharp course will suit Sound Man, but he blundered around Cheltenham a fortnight ago and, while he has winning form at this type of distance, Klairon Davis should again have his measure. **Selection:** *KLAIRON DAVIS*

3.10 MUMM MILDMAY NOVICE CHASE (CLASS A) (Grade 2) £35,000 added 3m 1f (Mildmay) BBC2

1 1121U1 ADDINGTON BOY (27) (D) (Gem Foods Limited) G Richards 8 11 10 ....B Harding
2 P-3P121 AVRO ANSON (25) (B P Skelton) M Camacho 8 11 7 ....M Dwyer
3 F11-111 HILL OF TULLOW (76) (Lady Harris) O Nicholson 7 11 7 ....R Dunwoody
4 12315P LINDEN'S LOTTO (16) (C) (Crocketts Racing Club) J White 7 11 7 ....L Wyer
5 12-3173 ACT THE WAG (31) (Robert Ogden) Andrew Turnell 7 11 4 ....P Carberry
6 533-11P GOLDEN SPINNER (15) (Sir Peter Miller) N Henderson 9 11 4 ....M A Fitzgerald
7 PF121F JIBBER THE KIBBER (15) (BF) (J Hitchins) Mrs J Pitman 7 11 4 ....W Marston
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Hill Of Tullow, 3-1 Addington Boy, 7-2 Jibber The Kibber, 6-1 Avro Anson, 12-1 Golden Spinner, 14-1 Act The Wag, 16-1 Linden's Lotto.

1995: Banjo 5 11 0 R Dunwoody 6-4 (M Pipe) 4 ran

FORM GUIDE

ACT THE WAG could be the bet at decent odds with the ground riding to his liking. He looked a fair sort when seeing off Bertone at Newbury in November and just failed to go with the stayers, Chief Rager and Do Rightly, in the mud at Leicester last time – his second run back from a lay-off. This is a step up in class, but the opposition have question marks against them. **Avro Anson** would lose these over hurdles and he'll never get a better chance of landing a good prize over fences with the ground in his favour. But his jumping isn't perfect as yet. Back in January at Newcastle Avro Anson was clear of **Addington Boy** when the latter came down at the last. Avro Anson is now 3lb better off. Addington Boy has since trotted up with a low weight in the *Great Yorkshire Handicap* and he's another here suited by fast ground. He is in with a real chance despite the penalty. **Hill Of Tullow** was a late withdrawal from the Sun Alliance Chase at Cheltenham. His wins at this trip at Sandown and Ascot were not without some dodgy jumping – he was picked off the floor to win at Sandown – and this *fast ground may not be ideal for him. However, he's a talented sort with every chance in a* weakish race if he gets round without mishap. **Jibber The Kibber** ruined his chance with *some poor jumping in the Cathcart at Cheltenham. His most impressive win was gained at* Warwick where he sprinted clear of Air Shot and Chief Rager, and this step up in distance *after Cheltenham may help him.* **Golden Spinner** also found the pace too hot in the Cathcart and was pulled up after blundering at the third last. He should appreciate this longer trip, though the fast ground could be a problem. **Selection:** ACT THE WAG

3.45 MARTELL FOX HUNTER CHASE (CLASS B) £20,000 added 2m 6f (Grand National course) BBC2

1 222/443- AS YOU WERE (314) (D Parravani) J Ibbott 14 12 0 ....Mr D Parravani
2 P3/2F-2P BROWN WINDSOR (13) (D) (C C Shand Kydd) Miss C Saunders 14 12 0 ....Mr B Pollock
3 F61/-R10 CLARE MAN (15) (M P Wareing) N Twiston-Davies 8 12 0 ....Mr A Balding
4 24P0-00 DARINGLY (251) (Michael Appleby) Michael Appleby 7 12 0 ....Major O Ellwood
5 133-PP1 DARK DAWN (13) (Mrs J M Newitt) Mrs J Brown 12 12 0 ....Mr G Shiers
6 P/0UU/1 DIRECT (23) (J A C Edwards) J Edwards 13 12 0 ....Mr T Edwards
7 0 EARLYDUE (15) (M J Jerram) P Doyle (Ir) 9 12 0 ....Mr T Moore
8 444-P34 FURRY KNOWE (25) (D) (David Pritchard) David Pritchard 11 12 0 ....Mr D Pritchard
9 /P/42-41 HAMPER (10) (N J Hoare) Piers Butler 13 12 0 ....Mr N R Mitchell
10 B20PB3- JUMBEAU (342) (Pell-mell Partners) P Chamings 11 12 0 ....Mr C Bonner
11 3535-23 KAMBALDA RAMBLER (9) (H Morton) R Crosby 12 12 0 ....Mr R Crosby
12 21/-313 KERRY ORCHID (15) (P Curling) E O'Grady (Ir) 8 12 0 ....Mr P Fenton
13 4/P112-0 MY NOMINEE (29) (D E Nicholls) D Nicholls 8 12 0 ....Mr A Griffith
14 0/5UP-51 OFF THE BRU (28) (J O Bradburne) Mrs S Bradburne 11 12 0 ....Mr M Bradburne
15 1/510-12 ON THE OTHER HAND (21) (BF) (Robert Ogden) G Richards 13 12 0 ....Capt A Ogden
16 3/RP/P-1 OVER THE EDGE (21) (Christopher Sporborg) S Sporborg 10 12 0 ....Mr S Sporborg
17 PP/51-53 PROFESSOR LONGHAIR (35) (Huw Davies) Mrs C Hicks 9 12 0 ....Mr R Hicks
18 U2/1P/3 QUICK RAPOR (29) (D G Alers-Hankey) Richard Barber 11 12 0 ....Capt D Alers-Hankey
19 3000-01 ROLLING BALL (FR) (27) (Mrs H J Clarke) S Brookshaw 13 12 0 ....Mr R Ford
20 212F-1F SHEER JEST (25) (CD) (BF) (Mrs Judy Wilson) W Warner 11 12 0 ....Mr A Hill
21 34P/1-3 SIR NODDY (13) (G W Briscoe) G Briscoe 13 12 0 ....Mr C Stockton
22 0413-32 SONOFAGIPSY (22) (Mrs B Whettam) J Dufosee 12 12 0 ....Mr P Henley
23 4444-41 SOUTHERN MINSTREL (29) (N Chamberlain) N Chamberlain 13 12 0 ....Miss C Metcalfe
24 4114-4F SYNDERBOROUGH LAD (29) (BF) (Stewart Pike) S Pike 10 12 0 ....Mr S Mulcaire
25 /001/-0 THE BIRD O'DONNELL (15) (Lady Sarah Barry) Richard Barber 10 12 0 ....Mr T J Barry
26 5P-1124 THE COUNTRY TRADER (205) (Racing Club of Wales) H Lavis 10 12 0 ....Mr J Jukes
27 P0/21-05 ULLSWATER (18) (Philip D Brougham) Miss Gillian A Russell 10 12 0 ....Miss G Russell
– 27 declared –

BETTING: 5-1 Kerry Orchid, 6-1 On The Other Hand, 7-1 Rolling Ball, Sheer Jest, 10-1 Brown Windsor, Southern Minstrel, Over The Edge, 12-1 others

1995: Sheer Jest 10 12 0 Mr A Hill 5-1 (W J Warner) 26 ran

FORM GUIDE

SHEER JEST won the race last year and appeals as being a safer proposition than the former Sun Alliance Chase winner **Rolling Ball**. It was a close thing 12 months ago with Sheer Jest renewing his effort from the final fence to beat **Brown Windsor** a length with **Dark Dawn** fading after being in front a further two lengths back in third, and **On The Other Hand** beaten 12 lengths into fifth. Sheer Jest looks just as good this season and would have won at Doncaster last time (a race he landed 12 months ago) but for falling two out. *Rolling Ball* was getting plenty of weight when staying clear of Double Silk at Warwick four weeks ago. The performance after the lay-off cannot be faulted, but he's now on faster ground and could go off at false odds in this more competitive affair. **Kerry Orchid** made mistakes when third *to Elegant Lord in the Cheltenham Foxhunters. He won at Fairyhouse beforehand when tried* in blinkers and there is no evidence he wants this faster ground. **Clare Man** was seventh *at Cheltenham after playing a prominent part until the top of the hill. He did it in fine style* at Haydock against inferior rivals the time before and today's shorter trip puts him in the picture. **Synderborough Lad** has his favoured ground. He fell at the first at Nottingham last time in the race won by **Southern Minstrel** with **Quick Rapor** staying on in third when 15 lengths into third. Synderborough Lad must go on the short-list, while Quick Rapor may take more interest today in his first-time blinkers. **Selection:** SHEER JEST

4.20 BELLE EPOQUE SEFTON NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS A) (Grade 1) £25,000 added 3m 110yds BBC2

1 00-3411 ARITHMETIC (27) (Robert & Elizabeth Hitchins) Mrs J Pitman 6 11 6 ....W Marston
2 3101 BLAZE AWAY (USA) (27) (Paul Mellon) I Balding 5 11 6 ....G Bradley
3 P21145 BUCKHOUSE BOY (18) (The Bawtry Boys) N Twiston-Davies 6 11 6 ....T Jenks
4 212510 BUTTERCUP JOE (18) (R C F Faetz) D Nicholson 6 11 6 ....A P McCoy
5 61-0410 CLAVERHOUSE (25) (BF) (Mrs Peter Corbett) J FitzGerald 7 11 6 ....M Dwyer
6 2-11125 FATHER SKY (35) (BF) (Kenneth Komfeld) O Sherwood 5 11 6 ....J A McCarthy
7 P-6UP10 LORD OF THE WEST (13) (BF) (Anne Duchess of Westminster) J J O'Neill 7 11 6 ....A Roche
8 21-3220 LOTTERY TICKET (16) (Alan Parker) J Edwards 7 11 6 ....M A Fitzgerald
9 023F41 MR KERMIT (25) (D) (D G Blagden) A J Wilson 5 11 6 ....L Harvey
10 3111P3 PHARANEAR (17) (D) (Stainless Threaded Fasteners Ltd) O Nicholson 6 11 6 ....R Dunwoody
11 F3-1010 PLEASURE SHARED (17) (D) (Tony Eaves) P Hobbs 8 11 6 ....P Carberry
12 1-2F11 SUPERIOR RISK (30) (D) (Darren C Mercer) M Pipe 7 11 6 ....D Bridgwater
13 111 TURNPOLE (41) (W J Williams) Mrs M Reveley 5 11 6 ....P Niven
14 213231 UNCLE KEENY (10) (D) (Richard Seed) J J O'Neill 8 11 6 ....A S Smith
15 411115 WISLEY WONDER (16) (The Wisley Golf Partnership) N Twiston-Davies 6 11 6 ....C Llewellyn
16 22022P YAHMI (17) (W E Sturt) J Old 6 11 6 ....G Upton
17 0-52152 FLOW (9) (D) (Mrs C J Dunn) R Buckler 7 11 1 ....B Powell
– 17 declared –

BETTING: 7-2 Pharanear, 4-1 Turnpole, 5-1 Superior Risk, 15-2 Father Sky, 9-1 Wisley Wonder, 12-1 Blaze Away, Buckhouse Boy, Buttercup Joe, 14-1 Arithmetic, 16-1 Pleasure Shared, 20-1 others

1995: Morgans Harbour 9 11 4 P Niven 6-1 (Mrs M Reveley) 15 ran

FORM GUIDE

Turnpole continues to impress, but this former Flat racer is faced with a stiffer test of stamina after his Newcastle handicap win from Sparky Gayle. The runner taken to outstay Turnpole is Jenny Pitman's **ARITHMETIC**, who would have won *a lot easier at Newbury last time* but for clouting the final three flights. Arithmetic had earlier landed the market support at Leicester in dogged fashion from What's Your Story, *and this extended three miles is right* up his street. **Claverhouse** is an interesting long-shot. His latest showing at Doncaster looked *too bad to be true and both his wins have been notched on fastish ground.* He certainly looked a nice sort when beating Bullens Bay at Uttoxeter and improvement can be expected. *Superior Risk has impressed with recent wins at Lingfield* and Taunton in the mud, but **Buckhouse Boy** and **Buttercup Joe** may not appreciate this faster ground after Cheltenham. **Father Sky** *can easily be fancied on this surface*, as can **Wisley Wonder**, a tough customer whose run came to an end on unsuitable soft ground at Chepstow. **Pharanear** and **Pleasure Shared** are others who could find this ground a bit too lively and, while **Blaze Away** acts well on fast going, he doesn't appeal as being up to this task. **Selection:** ARITHMETIC

4.50 ODDBINS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £17,500 added to stakes 2m 4f

1 121520 SOHRAB (18) (Mrs Joanne Richards) M Pipe 8 11 10 ....C Maude
2 60-3FP4 BARNA BOY (16) (D) (Lynn Wilson) N Henderson 8 11 10 ....M A Fitzgerald
3 323220/- SATIN LOVER (811) (D S Hall) Mrs M Reveley 8 11 8 ....P Niven
4 212-54F CALL MY GUEST (69) (D) (Derek O Carr) R Peacock 6 11 6 ....M Dwyer
5 B4-4400 ROBERTY LEA (16) (Wensleydale Const Ltd) Mrs M Reveley 8 11 2 ....W Marston
6 0-00120 GOLDEN HELLO (41) (G E Shouler) T Easterby 5 11 2 ....L Wyer
7 23331F HUNCHEON CHANCE (19) (D) (Anthony McAleese) I Ferguson (Ir) 6 10 12 ....A P McCoy
8 11-1115 MUSKORA (187) (D) (N C Savery) P Hobbs 7 10 11 ....R Dunwoody
9 /4/-540P NEEDWOOD MUPPET (17) (D) (D G Blagden) A J Wilson 9 10 9 ....L Harvey
10 22-UC10 TOP CEES (17) (BF) (R E Sangster) Mrs J Ramsden 6 10 7 ....A S Smith
11 1F/-P301 OUTSET (34) (D) (Mark Kilner) M Hammond 6 10 4 ....Mr C Bonner (3)
12 /114P-F LUMUMBA DAYS (77) (Henry Taylor) Martyn Meade 10 10 2 ....J Railton
13 4/5225-0 ARFER MOLE (13) (W E Sturt) J Old 8 10 1 ....J Osborne
14 11-3150 DOWN THE FELL (44) (D) (BF) (J Howard Johnson) J Howard Johnson 7 10 0 ....P Carberry
15 A02246 NODFORM WONDER (13) (D) (Equiname Ltd) O Eddy 9 10 0 ....Chris Webb (5)
16 64603-0 RICH LIFE (41) (Mrs Susan Gay) C Weedon 6 10 0 ....B Fenton (3)
– 16 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Down The Fell 9st 12lb, Nodform Wonder 9st 11lb, Rich Life 9st 7lb.

BETTING: 11-2 Top Cees, 6-1 Outset, 7-1 Barna Boy, 8-1 Huncheon Chance, 10-1 Call My Guest, Golden Hello, Muskora, 14-1 Arfer Mole, Roberty Lea, Satin Lover, Sohrab, 16-1 others

1995: Square Silk 6 11 0 S McNeill 16-1 (A Turnell) 22 ran

FORM GUIDE

BARNA BOY would have tested Tranglot and company at Cheltenham but for an untidy jump at the final flight. Beaten three and a half lengths into fourth, he has a fine chance to gain a deserved win on ground he likes. **Sohrab** made mistakes when finishing 12th at Cheltenham and this surface may count against him, while **Roberty Lea** (11th) also needs to improve. Mary Reveley also runs **Satin Lover**, an interesting sort after a run on the Flat at Doncaster last week. **Top Cees** ran like a non-stayer behind Great Easeby at Cheltenham (3m 2f) and this shorter trip is more his mark. He won a Chester Cup so should like these turns and he's well handicapped on his latest Wetherby win. **Huncheon Chance**, an early faller when favourite at Naas recently, had previously won at Fairyhouse with Tony McCoy up. Also, his showing against New Co (third at Cheltenham) at Gowran gives him a similar chance to Barna Boy at the weights. **Selection:** BARNA BOY

5.20 PERRIER JOUET HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS B) £15,000 added 3m 1f (Mildmay course)

1 P464-P1 PASHTO (22) (Raymond Tooth) N Henderson 9 11 10 ....M A Fitzgerald
2 12111-3 MORGANS HARBOUR (138) (BF) (P C W Owen) Mrs M Reveley 10 11 8 ....P Niven
3 251100 ELITE REG (28) (Martin Pipe Racing Club) M Pipe 7 11 4 ....D Bridgwater
4 11212-0 TARTAN TRADEWINDS (13) (D) (Mackinnon Mills) G Richards 9 11 3 ....B Harding (3)
5 1/-32148 STRONG MEDICINE (17) (Dr O B A Silk) K Bailey 9 11 3 ....T J Murphy (3)
6 F-F3UU3 ALL FOR LUCK (7) (C) (BF) (B J Craig) M Pipe 11 11 0 ....J Lower
7 P4/-111P HIGH PADRE (83) (D) (J S Murdoch) J FitzGerald 10 11 0 ....M Dwyer
8 2-P2000 COKENNY BOY (27) (D) (S D Hemstock) Mrs J Pitman 11 10 9 ....W Marston
– 8 declared –

BETTING: 11-4 Morgans Harbour, 7-2 Pashto, 5-1 All For Luck, 11-2 Strong Medicine, 7-1 Tartan Tradewinds, 9-1 Elite Reg, 10-1 High Padre, 12-1 Cokenny Boy.

1995: Flashthecash 9 10 3 J Osborne 9-2 (C Egerton) 13 ran

FORM GUIDE

MORGANS HARBOUR is taken to win this despite a lengthy absence. Just as effective over *fences and hurdles, he stays well and loves fast ground. He was ultra-game when beating* Jack Button over hurdles at the fixture last year and has a history of winning when fresh. **All For Luck**, who, according to Philip Fenton was going like a winner when falling four out in the Kim Muir at Cheltenham, has since run over a short trip at Newbury when third to Around The Horn. **Strong Medicine** has to run a good race on his favoured fast ground with the in-form claimer Timmy Murphy taking off 3lb. He was brought down at half-way in the Kim Muir at Cheltenham. **Cokenny Boy** jumps best on this type of surface and this Cheltenham and Ascot winner last season would probably have beaten Act Of Parliament at Worcester in November but for a blunder three out. **High Padre** is a similar type to Morgans Harbour with the Scottish National a likely target. He has gone up 7lb for the four-miler win from Mr Flanagan at Haydock in December and ran from out the handicap when pulled up in the Mildmay/Cazalet at Sandown. **Pashto** has come off worst with the raising of the weights, but the fast ground gives him hope after a Wincanton win from Larry's Lord. He has always had plenty of pace, but the weight may beat him. **Selection:** MORGANS HARBOUR

SEDGEFIELD

HYPERION
2.10 Goldmire 2.45 Superhoo 3.20 Iveagh Lad
3.55 Weaver George 4.30 Houghton 5.00 Camptosaurus

GOING: Good to Firm.

■ Left-hand, undulating course. Easy fences and long run-in on chase course of 500yds.

■ Racecourse is less than a mile south-west of town near junction of A689 and A177. Bus service from Stockton railway station (9 miles away) or Durham railway station (12 miles away). ADMISSION: Paddock £8 (OAPs £4); Course £2. CAR PARK: Free.

SIS RACING CHANNEL

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Quayside Cottage (3.20) won at Wetherby on Saturday.

LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Vision Of Light (2.10) sent 221 miles from R Oliver's Ditton stable in Gloucestershire; Blown A Fuse (2.10) sent 205 miles from J Upson's Adstone stable in Northamptonshire.

2.10 NOVICE SELLING H'CAP HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,450 added 2m 5f 110yds

1 520-605 EMILYMOORE (89) P Beaumont 5 11 10 ....B Grattan (7)
2 020505 FRYUP SATELLITE (16) Mrs J Brown 5 11 7 ....E Callaghan (5)
3 0-25000 JONAEM (69) Mrs E Slack 6 11 3 ....J Davidson (7)
4 404460 DASHMAR (41) J S Moore 9 11 3 ....N Bentley
5 05-004 SENSO (21) J Wainwright 5 11 2 ....P Midgley (3)
6 060600 HAUGHTON LAD (18) J Parkes 7 11 0 ....R McCarthy (7)
7 00-4022 KITTOCHSIDE LAD (31) Mrs S Austin 6 10 13 ....D Wilkinson
8 05-5005 CHARLISTIONA (127) J Dodds 5 10 13 ....Richard Guest
9 P0PP-3F DON'T TELL JUDY (31) Miss M Milligan 8 10 13 ....M Foster
10 6-05631 BLOWN A FUSE (14) J Upson 5 10 13 ....R Supple
11 6-32230 GOLDMIRE (65) W Timing 6 10 9 ....D Parker (3)
12 344500 TONY'S FEELINGS (20) T Dyer 8 10 8 ....B Storey
13 006002 CLOVER GIRL (24) B Ellison 5 10 6 ....Mr K Whelan (5)
14 0P6OU6 VISION OF LIGHT (7) H Oliver 6 10 3 ....Jacqui Oliver
15 50F56F PERCY PIT (23) H Alexander 7 10 0 ....F Leahy (3)
16 000 NARAYLAR (121) W Storey 4 10 0 ....R McGrath (7)
17 P0-P JUST PHYLLIS (24) Mrs M Reveley 6 10 0 ....Mr M H Naughton (7)
18 60000 KIND PRINCE (24) S Hams 4 10 0 ....Mr P Murray (7)
– 18 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Percy Pit 9st 13lb, Naraylar 9st 13lb, Just Phyllis 9st 12lb, Kind Prince 9st 9lb.

BETTING: 7-2 Blown A Fuse, 5-1 Senso, 7-1 Kittochside Lad, 8-1 Emilymoore, Clover Girl, 10-1 Goldmire, 12-1 others

2.45 JOHN JOYCE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,750 added 2m 1f

1 3024P DANCING HOLLY (78) R Wood 9 11 10 ....Mr C Mulhall
2 P-6P433 GLENUGIE (23) (CD) G M Moore 5 11 10 ....N Bentley
3 F-0300U GYMCRAK SOVEREIGN (44) (D) G Holmes 8 11 8 ....R Marley
4 233/3-03 ANY DREAM WOULD DO (28) (CD) P Beaumont 7 11 6 ....R Supple
5 02310 LATIN LEADER (25) C Parker 6 11 5 ....D Parker (3)
6 4-10820 ERINY (USA) (76) J Quinn 7 11 3 ....E Callaghan (5)
7 051154 TRESIDDER (21) M W Easterby 14 11 3 ....J Driscoll
8 250042 SUPERHOO (22) (CD) R Craggs 5 11 0 ....B Grattan (7)
9 231860 CANDID LAD (23) (CD) F Storey 9 10 5 ....B Storey
10 012F0P CADEAUX PREMIERE (65) Denys Smith 5 10 3 ....F Leahy (3)
11 00P5 ENCHANTED COTTAGE (13) M Hammond 4 10 0 ....J Callaghan
– 11 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Glenugie, 9-2 Enchanted Cottage, Any Dream Would Do, 6-1 Eriny, 7-1 Tresidder, 8-1 Superhoo, 12-1 Latin Leader, 15-1 others

3.20 STANLEY THOMPSON HUNTER CHASE (CLASS H) £2,750 added 3m 3f

1 2443P0- BOREEN OWEN (347) (CD) O Hairson 12 11 9 ....Mr T Morrison (7)
2 5/114-F FINAL HOPE (7) R Tate 8 11 9 ....Miss F Needham (7)
3 0P0P-35 FISH QUAY (13) Mrs K Lamb 13 11 9 ....Miss S Lamb (7)
4 /P12/P1- IVEAGH LAD (351) (CD) J Sawney 10 11 9 ....Mr N Tutty (5)
5 U2-P4 POLITICO POT (23) C Pickett 9 11 9 ....Mr S Whitaker (7)
6 DP/04/ QUAYSIDE COTTAGE (683) B Morley 8 11 9 ....Mr N Wilson (5)
7 /4143P/ QUEEN'S CHAPLAIN (727) Mrs M Morris 12 11 9 ....Mr Chris Wilson (7)
8 F5-044U RISKY DEE (21) (BF) V Thompson 7 11 9 ....Mr M Thompson (5)
9 P/U WHOSTHAT (28) O Lamb 10 11 9 ....Mr K Whelan (5)
– 9 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 Final Hope, 5-2 Iveagh Lad, 9-2 Quayside Cottage, 8-1 Politico Pot, 10-1 Boreen Owen, 12-1 Fish Quay, 14-1 others

3.55 SEDGEFIELD CHAMPION NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,500 added 2m 110yds

1 232111 SOLBA (USA) (10) (C) C Parker 7 12 0 ....B Storey
2 FF21F2 PAGLIACCIO (22) (D) M Hammond 8 11 8 ....R Supple
3 415-251 SALMAN (USA) (132) (D) Mrs V Ward 10 11 8 ....D Parker
4 403F01 WEAVER GEORGE (24) (C) I Hellens 6 11 8 ....M Brennan
5 0-50650 BOETHIUS (USA) (105) F Watson 7 11 2 ....T Reed
6 P/4PFP-P CARDINAL SINNER (4) J Wade 7 11 2 ....K Jones
7 D/0F COOLRENY (13) V Thompson 7 11 2 ....Mr M Thompson
8 00-6604 GULER-A (7) R Craggs 8 11 2 ....N Smith
9 05-5563 QUARTZ HILL (USA) (116) D Lamb 7 11 2 ....A Manners
10 063223 REBEL KING (10) M Barnes 6 11 2 ....P Waggott
11 2/P05 WELL BANK (24) H Alexander 9 11 2 ....F Leahy
12 23RP/P OVER THE ISLAND (31) J H Johnson 8 10 11 ....M Foster
13 DP9-350 BALI TENDER (24) M W Easterby 5 10 8 ....J Driscoll
– 13 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Solba, 7-2 Weaver George, 9-2 Pagliaccio, 6-1 Salman, 8-1 Rebel King, 16-1 Guler-A, 25-1 others

4.30 REG AND RIDLEY LAMB HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £5,500 added 2m 5f

1 3U2432 HOUGHTON (30) (CD) J H Johnson 10 12 0 ....M Foster
2 4/2113-5 POPESHALL (13) (CD) Ms G Williamson 9 11 11 ....F Leahy (3)
3 440AP5 BOARDING SCHOOL (21) C Parker 9 11 5 ....B Storey
4 431603 TWIN STATES (11) (C) J Turner 7 11 4 ....W Fry
5 63-403P POSITIVE ACTION (10) (C) M Barnes 10 11 4 ....T Reed
6 F2-00P5 SON OF IRIS (24) (CD) Mrs M Reveley 8 11 1 ....N Smith
7 44/320/ MASTER SALESMAN (665) Mrs V Ward 13 10 2 ....D Parker (3)
8 21421F BITACRACK (10) (BF) J Briert 9 10 0 ....L O'Hara
9 PP/2F FARMER'S HAND (59) B Ellison 9 10 0 ....Mr K Whelan (5)
10 20-3F4P LAURIE-O (104) (C) D Lamb 12 10 0 ....A Manners (7)
11 24-R343 ANOTHER RED (243) (CD) W Raw 8 10 0 ....B Grattan (7)
12 35-3400 BAD TRADE (55) O Alder 14 10 0 ....D Bentley
– 12 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Bitacrack 9st 12lb, Farmer's Hand 9st 7lb, Laurie-O 9st 4lb, Another Red 9st 3lb, Bad Trade 8st 11lb.

BETTING: 11-4 Houghton, 9-2 Bitacrack, 6-1 Farmer's Hand, 7-1 Twin States, 8-1 Boarding School, Son Of Iris, 14-1 Positive Action, 16-1 others

5.00 JUMP INTO SPRING 'NH' NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m 1f

1 223 ALIAS CHUBB (218) (BF) Mrs S Smith 5 11 2 ....Richard Guest
2 5-42640 CAMPTOSAURUS (105) D Alder 7 11 2 ....D Parker (3)
3 P-4 NICK THE BILL (143) J Wade 5 11 2 ....K Jones
4 P-2R044 NIFWAY (16) M Barnes 6 11 2 ....P Waggott
5 00-6 TRANSCENDENTAL (23) J Quinn 6 11 2 ....W Dwan
6 0-0PP TUBSAL (8) T Donnelly 7 11 2 ....B Storey
7 P440 DEAR EMILY (31) J Swiers 8 10 11 ....Mr N Wilson
8 00/00- LOGANI (385) O Nolan 8 10 11 ....D Wilkinson
9 0005 XAIPETE (44) G M Moore 4 10 8 ....J Callaghan
10 ZOBEJO Mrs J Brown 4 10 8 ....E Callaghan (5)
11 P0 CRAMBELLA (13) G Kelly 4 10 3 ....Mr P Murray (7)
12 PP FINER FEELINGS (11) J Wainwright 4 10 3 ....Mr K Green
– 12 declared –

BETTING: 7-2 Xaipete, 9-2 Alias Chubb, 6-1 Camptosaurus, Dear Emily, 7-1 Nifway, 8-1 Transcendental, 14-1 Logani, 16-1 others

LUDLOW

HYPERION
2.15 Mim-Lou-And 2.50 Too Sharp 3.25 Poly Screen 4.00 Monks Jay 4.35 Foxgrove 5.05 Gunner Sid 5.35 Flexwing

GOING: Good.

■ *Right-hand course. Chase course sharper than hurdles course.*

■ Course is NW of town off A49. Ludlow station (Hereford - Shrewsbury line) 2m. ADMISSION: Club £14 (accompanied under-16s free); Tattersalls £9; Course £5. CAR PARK: Free.

SIS

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: None.
LONG-DISTANCE RUNNERS: Roy Boy (2.15) & Charity Crusader (3.25) sent 198 miles from Mrs M Reveley's Lingdale stable in Cleveland.

2.15 LEINTHALL HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 4YO 2m

1 4051 MIM-LOU-AND (9) (CD) Miss H Knight 11 4 ....Mr J Culloty (5)
2 ALZOOMO J Glover 10 12 ....T Eley
3 PP BIDE OUR TIME (USA) (9) Graeme Roe 10 12 ....W Humphreys
4 BIYA O McCain 10 12 ....D McCain
5 FRANS LAD W Clay 10 12 ....Guy Lewis (3)
6 0045 HIGHLY CHARMING (7) W Muir 10 12 ....S McNeill
7 0 KAMERLING (FR) (48) R Ocken 10 12 ....D Meredith
8 05544 KETCHICAN (22) S Knight 10 12 ....S Burrough
9 0 NOBBY NORTH (88) G Thorner 10 12 ....A Thornton
10 06 PRINCE OF SPADES (18) F Jordan 10 12 ....J Lodder
11 03 ROY BOY (65) Mrs M Reveley 10 12 ....G Cahill (5)
12 00 TANGO MAN (31) R Price 10 12 ....J R Kavanagh
13 P00 WOODLANDS LAD TOO (8) P Pritchard 10 12 ....R Bellamy
14 P LIZAPET (10) P Pritchard 10 7 ....M Sharratt
15 U TAP ON TOOTSIE (66) I Wall 10 7 ....R Massey (5)
– 15 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Mim-Lou-And, 3-1 Roy Boy, 9-2 Highly Charming, 8-1 Ketchican, 12-1 Prince of Spades, 16-1 Alzoomo, 25-1 others

2.50 MIDDLETON NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,200 added 2m 4f

1 12424F HERBERT BUCHANAN (10) P Nicholls 6 11 9 ....Mr J Culloty (5)
2 232-0F BOLD DOLPHIN (9) T Forster 6 11 2 ....S Wynne
3 PR HARROW WAY (764) L Wells 6 11 2 ....S McNeill
4 P/06-400 MASTER MURPHY (29) C Broad 7 11 2 ....R Farrant
5 F45-P66 NIGHT FANCY (13) Mrs A Woodrow 9 11 2 ....J A McCarthy
6 1560/0 PLACID LAD (18) N Berry 9 11 2 ....M Bosley
7 1P10-33 TOO SHARP (24) Miss H Knight 6 10 11 ....J F Titley
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 6-4 Too Sharp, 3-1 Bold Dolphin, 9-2 Herbert Buchanan, 8-1 Night Fancy, 10-1 Placid Lad, 14-1 Master Murphy, 25-1 Harrow Way

3.25 WHITTON NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m 5f 110yds

1 4322P-3 RUTLAND GATE (NZ) (153) G Balding 9 11 13 ....R Greene
2 01-000 WYNBERG (17) T Forster 5 11 12 ....S Wynne
3 02002 COXWELL STEPTOE (23) Miss H Knight 6 11 9 ....J F Titley
4 405 CHARITY CRUSADER (23) Mrs M Reveley 5 11 8 ....G Cahill (5)
5 425000 ROMALITO (22) M Blanshard 6 11 4 ....S McNeill
6 034 POLY SCREEN (13) C Smith 5 11 2 ....B Clarke (7)
7 P0-0 GO FROLIC (41) Miss C Phillips 8 11 1 ....A Thornton
8 U56P-0 RELAXED LAD (104) J Peacock 7 11 1 ....R Bellamy
9 1/203 MARTELL SPIRIT (NZ) (16) P Hobbs 9 11 0 ....G Tormey (3)
10 P30-355 CAPTAIN COE (32) R Curtis 6 10 12 ....D Walsh (5)
11 500 YOUNG LUCKY (55) J Akehurst 5 10 11 ....J Leech
12 45-005 RIVERBANK ROSE (23) W Clay 5 10 11 ....Guy Lewis (3)
13 /000P4/ SPANISH BLAZE (697) Mrs M Jones 8 10 10 ....D Byrne
14 P/PR-11 NORTH BANNISTER (25) T McGovern 9 10 8 ....J R Kavanagh
15 50FPP5 RADIO CAROLINE (27) M Tate 8 10 2 ....R Farrant
16 P/0400-0 MARINERS COVE (27) C Broad 8 10 0 ....G Hogan (3)
17 00/60P4 SCEPTICAL (13) J Glover 8 10 0 ....T Eley
18 0/6000-F PLEASURE CRUISE (134) J Cresswell 8 10 0 ....R Massey (5)
– 18 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Sceptical 9st 13lb, Pleasure Cruise 9st 12lb.

BETTING: 7-2 Martell Spirit, 5-1 Rutland Gate, 6-1 Coxwell Steptoe, 8-1 North Bannister, 10-1 Riverbank Rose, 12-1 others

4.00 ORLETON HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 2m 4f

1 0-4P463 NEVADA GOLD (20) (D) F Yardley 10 12 0 ....A Thornton
2 3-22115 EARLY DRINKER (30) O Sherwood 8 11 6 ....S McNeill
3 3F006P FAIR BROTHER (8) G Balding 10 11 2 ....A Tory
4 5/36-464 LITTLE TOM (107) (D) J King 11 11 1 ....J R Kavanagh
5 0U2522- HOWGILL (384) Capt I Forster 10 11 0 ....S Wynne
6 F46512 MONKS JAY (13) (C) (BF) G Thorner 7 10 6 ....Mr J Culloty (5)
7 4P-2063 PEGMARINE (USA) (13) Mrs A Woodrow 13 10 0 ....G Hogan (3)
8 PP-UPP0 CLOWN AROUND (16) J Hutsby 8 10 0 ....M Sharratt
– 8 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Early Drinker, 5-2 Nevada Gold, 7-2 Monks Jay, 6-1 Little Tom, 7-1 Howgill, 8-1 Pegmarine, 12-1 others

4.35 GREETE NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,200 added 3m

1 403212 VERYVEL (CZE) (22) J M Bradley 5 11 10 ....R Farrant
2 2231-30 POPPEA (76) T Forster 7 11 6 ....S Wynne
3 PP-P4PP SILVER AGE (USA) (16) J Bosley 10 11 5 ....M Bosley
4 2623U3 OH SO HANDY (132) R Curtis 8 10 13 ....D Walsh (5)
5 R425PU FOXGROVE (16) R Price 10 10 7 ....Miss E I Jones (7)
6 5FF425 DUSKY ROVER (8) Miss H Knight 7 10 7 ....Mr I Culloty (5)
7 P-05 PHAEDAIR (20) P Hobbs 6 10 6 ....G Tormey (3)
8 225/PU0 CWM ARCTIC (9) Mrs A Price 9 10 6 ....Mr M Jackson
9 0/0 SWEET BEN (43) Mrs M Jones 11 10 0 ....D Byrne
– 9 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Sweet Ben 9st 6lb

BETTING: 2-1 Veryvel, 3-1 Oh So Handy, 5-1 Dusky Rover, 7-1 Poppea, 8-1 Silver Age, Phaedair, 10-1 Foxgrove, 14-1 others

5.05 INTERMEDIATE OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) (DIV I) £1,600 added 2m

1 BAYERD C Egerton 5 11 4 ....J A McCarthy
2 60 EQUINOX (30) Mrs M Jones 5 11 4 ....D Byrne
3 65 GUNNER SID (30) B Preece 5 11 4 ....Gary Lyons
4 IN THE ROUGH O Nicholson 5 11 4 ....R Massey (5)
5 00 OPTIMISTIC AFFAIR (71) A Streeter 5 11 4 ....T Eley
6 SIERRA NEVADA P Nicholls 5 11 4 ....M Griffiths (7)
7 SOPHIES DREAM J M Bradley 5 11 4 ....Guy Lewis (3)
8 REPARTEE Miss H Knight 5 10 13 ....G F Ryan (5)
9 ALL SEWN UP (8) R Baker 4 10 10 ....D Leahy
10 BARTON GATE (NZ) S Brookshaw 4 10 10 ....Mr R Thornton (7)
11 STONE CHATT F Yardley 4 10 10 ....A Thornton
12 00 BAY FAIR (7) J Bosley 4 10 5 ....Paul Thompson (7)
– 12 declared –

BETTING: 11-4 In The Rough, 7-2 Repartee, 6-1 Sierra Nevada, 8-1 Bay Fair, Gunner Sid, 10-1 Sophies Dream, 14-1 In The Rough, 16-1 others

5.35 INTERMEDIATE OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) (DIV II) £1,600 added 2m

1 ARCTIC TRIUMPH M Bradstock 5 11 4 ....P Holley
2 0 FOLLOW DE CALL (154) D McCain 6 11 4 ....D McCain
3 KINGSLAND TAVERNER O Sherwood 5 11 4 ....D Thomas (7)
4 MR BOJANGLES K Bailey 5 11 4 ....A Thornton
5 PHARDANTE'S WAY D Nicholson 5 11 4 ....R Massey (5)
6 50- FLEXWING (398) T Holland-Martin 6 10 13 ....J R Kavanagh
7 GREY DANTE S Brookshaw 5 10 13 ....Mr R Thornton (7)
8 MAID FOR ADVENTURE Miss H Knight 6 10 13 ....G F Ryan (5)
9 0 OLDEN DAYS (24) G Thorner 4 10 10 ....Clare Thorner (7)
10 SEVEN WELLS J Peacock 4 10 10 ....R Bellamy
11 0 MOLLIE SILVERS (69) J Cresswell 4 10 5 ....G Tormey (3)
– 11 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Maid For Adventure, 3-1 Phardante's Way, 9-2 Kingsland Taverner, 5-1 Mr Bojangles, 8-1 Mollie Silvers, 10-1 Flexwing, 12-1 others

sport

Star made by the 10 wise men

KEITH ELLIOTT
at large

If Mark Chaloner wins the World Squash Championships – and many people are saying that it is not a matter of if, but when – his victory speech is likely to take quite some time.

It is not that Chaloner, who takes part in the British Open, which starts on Monday at the Cardiff Institute of Sport, is naturally garrulous. But his list of credits ("I would particularly like to thank…") is substantially more than mum and dad. Those who know him well say that Chaloner will certainly give full credit to the 10 wise men.

Chaloner, 23, has shot into squash's élite faster than a Jansher Khan forehand. In 1994, he was rated 53 in the world and only 15th in the United Kingdom. He had a reputation as a talented player but one who seemed unable to handle pressure on key points.

Now he is ninth in the world and the UK's No 2: fitter, stronger and with a killer touch. The secret? A unique (for squash, anyway) support team of coach, psychologist, masseur, marketing consultant, physiotherapist, sports scientist, business adviser, racket sponsor, financial adviser and personal sponsor. He is the star who saw the 10 wise men.

The man who turned Mark Chaloner, squash player, into Mark Chaloner Ltd is his manager and coach, John Milton. "It all started when Mark was 18. I was coaching the Herts juniors at the time. He came to see me and said: 'I want to turn professional: what do I do?' I didn't know."

Unfettered by traditional thinking, Milton talked to lots of people, from Steve Ovett's coach, Harry Wilson, to the former squash world champion Jonah Barrington. But his real inspiration came from football. "I realised it is basically business. However talented a person, he can't manage every aspect. You have to find the right person, someone with special skills but in tune with you." Basic stuff, perhaps, but for squash it was revolutionary.

Milton sought four key people: a psychologist; a physio; a masseur; and a scientist. It took nearly four years to find the right combination. Now the formula has added extra ingredients. Milton has reinforced the team and set up Prospects Squash Management, which aims to give the same specialist approach to other rising stars.

It is a business, and the players are the product. "For example, we set targets for Mark to achieve. And like any business, everything doesn't always go right. He had some good results between 18 and 22, but never really showed the kind of form consistently that he has achieved in the past 12 months."

At one stage, Chaloner came close to giving up, but as Milton moulded his team together, his theory turned into practice. Chaloner suddenly came good. He won the British Under-23 Championships in 1994, and has not looked back. "There are aspects of his game that he needs to work on, but I am certain that he will apply himself to them and he has the willpower to get through," Milton said.

It might appear that sports psychologist Alfred Jones, from Horsham, Surrey, had finished his work now that Mark has overcome his own mental barriers. Under his influence, Chaloner has risen from 87th in the world to ninth. But Jones says a new set of challenges face their protégé. "The difference between a very good player and a champion is that the champion wins when he is not playing well."

Many potentially great players do not succeed because external problems, mainly money, affect their concentration worse than someone with hiccups at a snooker final. Milton has surrounded Chaloner with people to remove these worries.

For example, Grays supplies his equipment while ICL gives him support on travelling, a retainer and an achievement bonus. Norman Elliott, the director of finance for ICL Sorbus Europe, first saw Chaloner as a junior player in the Herts League. "It was clear he was going places, but just as important to us was the way he handled himself. He was the sort of person we wanted to be associated with."

These sentiments are echoed by Richard Gray, marketing manager for Grays of Cambridge. "Mark plays a key role in adapting our range of rackets."

Chaloner could earn as much as £50,000 this year if he continues to progress. That may be shoelace sponsorship for tennis professionals but it is pretty good money for a squash player.

A financial adviser, Ray Milsted, is guiding him through these years of relative poverty (Chaloner earned less than £18,000 last year), but ensuring the money is wisely invested if he joins the big earners and, with a relatively short earning span, it is important that Chaloner's potential is maximised. That is the job of management consultant Andy Mawson. Marketing Mark, meanwhile, is down to Mike Osborne.

Ed Winter, who is responsible for exercise physiology at Bedford University, assesses Chaloner's strengths and weaknesses about four times a year. "He is young and still developing, but his prospects are excellent." Both physio Mike Varney and the final team member, masseur Peter King, concur. "There are much bigger guys that I treat who can't take treatment at the depth Mark likes me to work. I can see him coming on in leaps and bounds," King says.

A gimmick, or a professional approach to a sport renowned for its amateur approach? Milton says: "Squash is a very insular sport. It doesn't look outside itself enough. Some of the world's top 10 players are not earning what Mark is getting. But this it only the start."

Chaloner: Taking care of business Photograph: Peter Jay

Teenagers oust Boxall and Cooper

Tim Glover sees the semi-final line-up settled in golf's Sunningdale Foursomes

About the only thing that changes over the Old Course are the names of the winners of the Sunningdale Foursomes. Nearly 70 years ago Bobby Jones shot 66 here and he would still remember every hole. He would probably also recognise the menu, the only concession to modern developments being a reassurance that the beef comes from the "finest Scottish herds grazed naturally". As for humble pie, the recipe is as it always was.

Reputations count for nothing. Yesterday morning, in the fourth round of the 55th Foursomes, Richard Boxall and Derrick Cooper, defending champions, were sent packing by a couple of teenagers. But then this championship, played by young and old, amateur and professional, male and female, prize rooster and feather duster, is a timely reminder that golf is perhaps the most humbling of sports.

Last Sunday the Australian Wayne Riley was being fêted as the Portuguese Open champion in Lisbon, confirmation that he is now a serious contender following his victory in the Scottish Open at Carnoustie last summer. Riley, who won £54,000 in Portugal, paid a modest entry fee to play in the Sunningdale Foursomes and yesterday he, too, shook hands with humility.

Riley, who has a house in Camberley, Surrey, partnered Gary Smith, the professional at Camberley Heath. Smith coaches Riley and Boxall so yesterday was not exactly the most memorable day of his career. Sean Whiffin, a professional from Enfield, and his amateur partner, Jeremy Jones, were four up after 12 holes before Riley and Smith, in tandem with pendulum putters, restored the balance.

The match went to extra holes and at the 20th Riley's 10-foot putt for victory bobbled alarmingly and kicked left. The end came at the 21st, the short par-four third, where Smith left his pitch shot woefully short and Jones chipped to within four feet of the flag, enabling his partner to win the hole and the match with a birdie three. Alas Smith and Riley.

Boxall and Cooper, seasoned campaigners on the European Tour, were given short shrift by a couple of amateurs not yet old enough to understand the coincidence of nerves with a four-foot putt. Luke Donald, 18, from Beaconsfield, and Michael O'Connor, 19, from Stoke Poges, were in receipt of two strokes from Boxall and Cooper but it was a superfluous advantage.

Donald and O'Connor won four of the first five holes and Boxall and Cooper were put out to grass at the 14th. The teenagers finished in style, Donald holing a 10-foot putt for an eagle three to secure a handsome 5 and 4 win. Donald and O'Connor took an even shorter cut, putting out Kenilworth's Warren Bladon and Gareth Jenkins 7 and 5 in the quarter-finals.

This morning Donald and O'Connor meet Whiffin and Jones in the semi-finals. In the other semi, the Scottish pairing of tour professionals Gillian Stewart and Julie Forbes play John Morgan and Mark Landrum. Stewart, a beaten finalist in 1987, has the assistance here this week of Ian Wright, the former caddie to Seve Ballesteros.

Stewart and Forbes were two down after two against Richard Hurst and Trevor Paterson and were one down playing the 16th. They won the hole with the benefit of a shot off the handicap and won the 18th and the match with a five to a six after their opponents had been bunkered. Humble pie was also on the supper menu.

Scores, Sporting Digest, page 31

Ballesteros has to withdraw

Seve Ballesteros was forced to withdraw after playing only 10 holes of the Players' Championship at Ponte Vedra Beach in Florida yesterday.

The Spaniard, who is languishing in 174th place in the European Order of Merit after playing only two events on this season's tour, suffered more problems with his back.

Ballesteros, winner of three Opens and two US Masters, reported that his back, which had forced him recently to take a five-month break from golf, felt fine on the range and did not tighten up until he had hit his sixth tee shot.

"I can't swing the club. I couldn't get it far enough back and couldn't swing it forward," he said. Ballesteros still hopes to play next week in Atlanta and at the Masters the following week.

Ballesteros, recently named captain of the European Ryder Cup team, shot 41 for his first nine and then bogeyed the 10th hole to stand six over par when he pulled out.

In Santo da Serra, England's Paul Lyons at last made a name for himself on the European circuit when he took a share of the first-round lead in the Madeira Island Open.

The 29-year-old from Bromley, playing only his fourth tour event in a professional career dating back to 1987, had an eagle and five birdies in a four-under-par 68, which on a blustery day was good enough to put him alongside another Englishman, Ross McFarlane, in the race for the £50,000 first prize.

TODAY'S NUMBER

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The age of Paul Lee who yesterday became the youngest speedway rider in the world to be on an official contract when he joined Peterborough. The Nottingham teenager will ride for the Panthers' second team.

Hughes focuses on his chance to make history

Obstructing the Chelsea striker's pursuit of FA Cup glory in Sunday's semi-final is his former club. Trevor Haylett reports

There are those Chelsea players for whom Wembley 1994 remains such a bitter memory that even now, two years on, they find it impossible to watch a recording of the game. For Mark Hughes there is no playback pain, a goal and a 4-0 victory granting Manchester United a Double celebration.

Two other winning Cup final occasions swell the video collection in the Hughes household. One more and he will have achieved something no other player this century can lay claim to, and as fate would have it the side who at Villa Park on Sunday obstruct his Wembley return and a shot at a historic third winner's medal is the one he left behind last summer.

It is a mark of the man and the service he guaranteed through many campaigns that letters of appreciation from United supporters doubled the daily load of the postman who calls at the Chelsea training ground. The flood of correspondence has stopped these past two weeks, but that is only to be expected. Of all the aspects to semi-final day, sentimentality is not one of them.

Hughes, the arch competitor, would have it no other way. "Because of my affection for United this could have been a difficult game for me but they're the team standing in the way of me getting to Wembley and there can be no divided loyalties as far as I am concerned."

The chances of Chelsea making it will rise considerably if the strong man at the head of their attack shakes off a calf strain, a legacy of the quarter-final against Wimbledon. According to Glenn Hoddle, the Chelsea manager, it was a game that best showed what Hughes is all about: skill, aggression and total commitment, and woe betide any injury that dares come between Hughes and his destiny: "This is a big, big game for me and it would be disappointing not to make it, but the muscle feels better than it did at the weekend and I should be all right."

As the focal point of their link-up play, Hughes has been crucial to Chelsea's improvement, the one whose ability to retain possession frees runners and enables Ruud Gullitt to prime those extravagant, laser-accurate passes. "Mark's experience and big-game pedigree have been important to us all season," Hoddle said simply.

At 32, Hughes's desire remains as intense as when he first emerged at Old Trafford 13 years ago. Frequently it carries him over the line of acceptability, and an appearance before the Football Association next week to explain the indiscretions which have accumulated 45 disciplinary points that could put his appearance at Wembley in jeopardy.

It is one facet of his game that has disappointed him since he arrived at Stamford Bridge. That and scoring goals. He has eight but knows it is insufficient in a side short of marksmen.

"It's different at United where the goals tend to be spread around the team. Apart from Eric [Cantona] there's Ryan [Giggs], Lee Sharpe and so many others. Andy Cole has taken stick unfairly for the chances he has missed. He has contributed a lot with his work outside the box, and I just hope he doesn't take it out on us by knocking one in on Sunday."

Hughes: No divided loyalties

INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL: Venables and Brown see encouraging signs for *Euro 96* but McCarthy suffers losing start

England subdue their detractors

GLENN MOORE

It is often hard to read friendlies and Wednesday's international between England and Bulgaria was no exception. There are some who believe that foreign teams only try in competitive matches and view every English performance accordingly. If England win easily, the opposition were not interested; if they do not, England were rubbish.

Such a simplistic view ignores the fact that even a settled side like Bulgaria has people playing for their places, and every country has its pride. With slight reservations England's 1-0 win over Bulgaria, one of the dark horses for *Euro 96*, was impressive.

The reservations concern England's inability to kill off their opponents in a first half when the visitors may have been less than fully committed; and their loss of dominance in the second period.

Having only assembled on Tuesday, and then lost both Hristo Stoichkov and an early goal, Bulgaria could be forgiven for starting slowly. The second half, when more motivated fringe players were introduced, and senior players reacted to a half-time tongue-lashing, may be a truer indication of their mettle – and England's ability.

Yet England were still the better side. By the time David Seaman was exercised in the closing stages Teddy Sheringham, Les Ferdinand and Steve McManaman had each had chances to secure victory. It was a night when no England player could be said to have played badly. Steve Stone, though more subdued, was typically solid and was a frequent visitor to the box – only this time the knock-downs did not fall his way. On the other flank McManaman illustrated his growing confidence at this level with a couple of thrilling runs. Both players came inside while maintaining England's shape. With Paul Ince and Paul Gascoigne holding the centre, England had an encouraging balance.

Ince made a fine return. "Just like the old Paul Ince of Manchester United," it was suggested to the England coach. "Err, similar," said a wary Venables. "Playing in Italy has opened his mind tactically." Indeed, this was a more restrained Ince, no longer chasing all over the park, diving in with tackles, and being caught out of position and in the referee's notebook.

Though Ince says he is the same player, he is not. He appears to have accepted that his best role is as a defensive midfielder, protecting the back four and only advancing when appropriate. At one stage on Wednesday he stepped into central defence when Gareth Southgate moved forward; at another he filled the right-back spot as Gary Neville pushed up.

It brought to mind Ruud Gullit's assertion, before the Newcastle United-Manchester United game a few weeks ago, that it was Manchester, not Newcastle, whose game more closely matched Dutch total football. Gullit pointed out that Manchester's players were better at filling each other's positions. Later that night there was a classic example when Gary Neville went forward. As the attack broke down one looked to the right-back spot, and there was Eric Cantona, filling the hole.

Venables is aiming for similar versatility with his players. This needs ability as well as discipline. It is all very well a left-back being on the wing, or vice-versa, but he needs to know what he is doing when he gets there. Thus Venables' preference for young, flexible defenders, like the Nevilles, Southgate and Steve Howey.

Some positions remain the home of specialists. The way Les Ferdinand took his goal will have given Venables – and Alan Shearer – much to think about. So, too, Fowler's appearance. While he had no chance to score, a sweet cross-field ball to McManaman illustrated both the growing range of his game, and his composure.

Venables' evening was capped by news of Darren Anderton, who had 45 minutes for Spurs reserves. He could yet be an influence in the summer.

A footnote on a busy international night: of 11 matches only the attendance in Dublin exceeded that at Wembley. Germany could only attract 25,000 to play Denmark, Belgium and France drew just 16,000, while Portugal had a derisory 3,000 for the visit of Greece.

Paul Ince, who impressed in midfield on his return to the England side on Wednesday

Photograph: Empics

Scotland show their mean side

PHIL SHAW

If football is a religion then Craig Brown is one of its fundamentalists. He cannot drive past a park game without stopping to affirm his faith. And where others perceive only bleakness, he finds satisfaction and solace.

So it was that Brown, while wise enough not to claim that his team's 1-0 defeat of Australia might one day feature on the *Match of the Nineties* video, was quick to accentuate the positive aspects. Unfortunately for the 21,000 at Hampden Park, chief among these was the negative one of stopping goals.

England's low scorers be warned: Scotland are piling up clean sheets faster than a decent-sized Holiday Inn. After leaking only three goals in 12 games in qualifying for the European Championship finals, they recorded "yet another", as their manager proudly proclaimed it, against Australia. Nor was it a feat to be sniffed at, Brown insisted, citing the Socceroos' improving pedigree.

This exemplary Scottish meanness is due in significant part to Jim Leighton. For the 37-year-old goalkeeper, reborn with Hibernian, Wednesday's shut-out was his 36th in 72 internationals, and he produced what Brown termed "a wonderful save" early in the second half to improve his tally.

Australia's Mark Bosnich, probably among the top 10 on the planet in Leighton's position, said: "That's the hallmark of a quality keeper: staying involved when you don't have much to do. It was like a game of slow chess, but all of a sudden Jim had to make a great save. In almost their next attack Ally McCoist scored, so the game turned on that moment."

The Aston Villa keeper was intrigued by Scotland's approach, which confounded his image of the game north of the wall. "They seemed to play within themselves and were more patient than I expected. I thought they'd work the flanks and get in more crosses."

Having said that, Bosnich noted with a rueful smile, the winner stemmed from just such a centre. Brown, asked whether the goal had clinched McCoist's ticket to *Euro 96*, said he would "reserve judgement", but added: "Getting a header like that past a world-class keeper hasn't done him any harm."

McCoist's place may be assured anyway. As unofficial entertainments officer, he is good for squad morale, and his knack of conjuring goals in tight contests could yet be invaluable. "We want to know what his Lottery numbers are," Brown said. "The success he has, it can't be long before he wins that too."

Of the other fringe forwards, Kevin Gallacher did most to enhance his prospects, not only by supplying the crucial cross but because he showed a commodity scarce among Brown's options: scorching pace. John Spencer was less conspicuous, though he was praised for his versatility.

As a dummy run for the tactical battles ahead, however, the game's value was questionable. Australia and the Netherlands may operate similar defensive systems, but the Dutch use theirs as a springboard for attack rather than to stifle the opposition.

Brown expects a "much stiffer test" in next month's Copenhagen friendly against Denmark, the European champions. He may also be heartened to hear that Bosnich believes Scotland will be "dangerous opposition in the finals, especially if anyone underestimates them", and predicts that they could well reach the second phase.

Flaws in the new Republic format

DEREK POTTER

Though he did himself and the Republic of Ireland no favours with a flash of frustration in Dublin, Roy Keane may have helped to focus the thinking of England and Scotland before *Euro 96*.

Russia were not just "comfortable on the ball" as managers say, they revealed a technique, speed of movement and thought and individual skills which are rapidly expanding in Continental nations.

"Russia are one of the best teams in the world," Mick McCarthy said after his first game in charge. McCarthy switched to a modern format with three central defenders and two "wing backs" after the contrasting style that served Jack Charlton so well.

Against teams of Russia's calibre, the problems created individual frustrations leading to a red card for the acting captain, Keane, as much as collective failure. McCarthy hinted at that in his inquest on a 2-0 defeat and the dismissal of Keane seconds before the end.

"I have learned from a disappointing defeat that we can play our system and we can compete at passing the ball around," McCarthy said. "In the first half we were dithering at the back and clattering the ball forward. It was no good to us. But when we believed in it in the second half, we looked capable of competing and created a lot of problems for them."

Liverpool's Mark Kennedy, Blackburn Rovers' Jeff Kenna, a second-half replacement for the injured Andy Townsend, and goalkeeper Shay Given made outstanding contributions.

The subsitution of penalty expert John Aldridge before Steve Staunton's spot-kick was saved, added to Irish misfortunes.

■ Northern Ireland made a losing start to their 1998 World Cup campaign when they were beaten 2-0 at home to Norway. The Irish striker Iain Dowie was sent off five minutes from the end.

Barrow buried under deluge of problems

Non-League notebook

RUPERT METCALF

Barrow, once members of the Football League but now struggling to climb out of the UniBond League, have endured a bad couple of weeks. They have lost a manager, two directors due to outside commitments and, worst of all, they have learned that they will not be accepted back in to the GM Vauxhall Conference, should they finish in a promotion position.

Tony Hesketh resigned as manager last week to become assistant manager at Morecambe. Yesterday Graham Barrow, formerly in charge at Wigan and Chester, turned down the job, so caretakers Neil McDonald and Frank Ventre carry on.

Fourth-placed Barrow are ineligible for promotion to the Conference not because their Holker Street ground is inadequate – they open a new stand against Winsford tomorrow – but because they did not submit sufficient financial details to the Conference in time.

The UniBond League leaders, Bamber Bridge, and third-placed Hyde did not apply because of their grounds. Second-placed Boston United did not supply any financial details to the Conference.

Rushden & Diamonds, six points clear in the Beazer Homes League, and second-placed Halesowen Town, have been approved by the Conference, as have five Icis League teams: Hayes (the leaders), Enfield, Yeovil, Kingstonian and Boreham Wood. Promotion is open to champions or runners-up in all three feeder leagues.

SPORTING DIGEST

Benn back in business

Boxing

Nigel Benn yesterday ended one of the shortest retirements in history while dismissing any chance of a third fight against Chris Eubank.

"There's no grudge match between me and Eubank. It will never happen," the 32-year-old Benn said. "I'm not going to go out a loser," he added. "I still have it in me. I'm hungry to go back. I feel naked without my belt."

Benn is being lined up to challenge Ireland's World Boxing Organisation champion, Steve Collins, in late June, probably in England. There will be no warm-up bouts following his World Boxing Council title defeat to "Sugar Boy" Malinga in Newcastle 26 days ago, after which he announced his retirement.

Athletics

Kenny Krabbe's successful civil court battle which ended yesterday could force the world authorities to soften their penalties for drug cheats. As a result of the case, German athletes can now take the IAAF to court and win if they are banned for more than two years. Krabbe is not expected to make a comeback.

Badminton

NBA: LA Lakers 106 Miami 95; Philadelphia 103 Toronto 94; Indiana 89 Washington 93; Boston 121 Minnesota 116; San Antonio 90 New York 84; Dallas 117 Houston 114; Utah 98 Milwaukee 82; Seattle 132 Charlotte 95.

BUDWEISSER LEAGUE: Birmingham Bullets 106 Leicester Riders 90; Manchester Giants 88 Doncaster Panthers 87; Leopards 58 Sheffield Sharks 65.

Bowls

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS (Adelaide) Fours: Section A: Ireland bt Australia 27-17; Jersey bt Cook Islands 24-14; Malawi bt Singapore 19-14; Scotland bt Zimbabwe 24-14; Australia bt Singapore 29-11; Zimbabwe bt Cook Islands 36-13; Ireland bt Malawi 48-10; Scotland bt Jersey 24-20. **Section B:** Eton Bt Canada drew with Norfolk Island 19-19; New Zealand bt Hong Kong 23-16; Namibia bt Papua New Guinea 24-18; Norfolk Island bt Brazil 23-17; Papua New Guinea bt Hong Kong 21-14; Namibia bt New Zealand 22-13. **Section C:** Malaysia bt Botswana 24-13; England bt South Africa 25-21; Swaziland bt Guernsey 21-14; Kenya bt Thailand 22-13; Botswana bt Thailand 22-18; England bt Swaziland 42-6; Guernsey bt South Africa 18-17; Malaysia bt Kenya 24-14. **Section D:** Wales bt Argentina 19-15; Western Samoa bt Fiji 20-19; United States bt Israel 18-16; Fiji bt Zambia 40-10; Wales bt Israel 28-22; United States bt Argentina 24-16.

Football

The Endsleigh League has followed the Premier League by moving the season's final programme of First Division fixtures to Sunday 5 May (3pm kick-offs).

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY (Sao Jose do rio preto, brazil): Brazil Olympic team 8 (Ze Maria 16, Savio pen 44, Andre Luis pen 53, Marques 56, 90, Rivaldo 79, Alexandre Lopez 88, Luizao 89) Ghana 2 (Tony Yeboah 46, Duah 83).

TRANSFERS: Georgie Sharples Ayr United to York (£75,000); **Paul Mitchell** (defender) West Ham to Bournemouth (No fee); **Jonathan Sunderland** Blackpool to Scarborough (no fee).

LOAN TRANSFERS: **Derek Allen** (defender) Southampton to Brighton; **Craig Armstrong** (defender) Nottm Forest to Bristol Rovers; **Lee Ashcroft** (forward) West Brom to Notts County; **Charlie Bishop** (defender) Barnsley to Burnley; **Peter Butler** (midfielder) Notts County to West Brom; **Wayne Fairclough** (defender) Chesterfield to Scarborough; **Mark Flatts** (midfielder) Arsenal to Grimsby; **Ian Hathaway** (midfielder) Torquay to Chesterfield; **Mustafa Izzet** (midfielder) Chelsea to Leicester; **Marc Joseph** Cambridge to Coventry; **John Kay** (defender) Sunderland to Shrewsbury; **Paul Marborn** (forward) Tottenham to Burnley; **David McDougald** (forward) Brighton to Chesterfield; **Paul Scott McGleish** (forward) Peterborough to Colchester; **Ezekiel Rowe** (midfielder) Chelsea to Brighton; **Gary Sharpson** (defender) Luton to Fulham; **Andrew Turner** (midfielder) Tottenham to Southend; **Paul Wilkinson** (forward) Middlesbrough to Luton; **Paul A Williams** (forward) Rochdale to Doncaster; **Paul A Williams** Charlton to Torquay.

WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: International friendlies: England 1 Bulgaria 0; N Ireland 0 Norway 2; Rep Ireland 0 Russia 2; Scotland 1 Australia 0; Germany 2 Denmark 0; Belgium 0 France 2; Portugal 1 Greece 0; Austria 1 Romania 0; Poland 0 Slovenia 0; Yugoslavia 1 Romania 0; Slovakia 4 Belarus 0. **Endsleigh Insurance League First Division:** Portsmouth 1 Port Vale 2. **Third Division:** Hereford 1 Lincoln City 0. **GM Vauxhall Conference:** Gateshead 2 Altrincham 3. **Beazer Homes League Premier Division:** Newport AFC 2 Ilkeston 3; Baldock 0 Cambridge City 0. **Midland Division:** Solihull Borough 2 Paget Rangers 1. **Southern Division:** Poole 0 Yate 6. **UniBond League First Division:** Bradford Park Avenue 2 Lincoln Utd 3. **Challenge Cup semi-final first leg:** Boston Utd 1 Leek. **Icis League Second Division:** Collier Row 1 Hemel Hempstead 1. **Third Division:** Harlow 2 Clapton 1; Lewes 3 Aveley 2; Wealdstone 0 Camberley 0. **Hellenic League Premier Division:** Cirencester 2 North Leigh 1; Dereham 2 Tuffley Rovers 2; Fairford 0 Swindon Supermarine 1. **Federation Brewery Northern League First Division:** Pedlington 3 RTM Newcastle 0; Shildon 4 Crook 2; Stocksbridge 0 Dunston 3; Whickham 0 Whitby 3. **Intertink Express Midland Alliance Industrial Rewinds League Cup semi-final second leg:** Sandwell Borough 2 Blakenall 1 (2-2 on aggregate; Blakenall win on away goals). **Jewson Eastern League Premier Division:** Felixstowe 2 Felixstowe 1; Soham 0 Halstead 0; Sudbury Wanderers 5 Cornard 1. **North West Counties League First Division:** Penrith 0 Clitheroe 0. **Northern Counties East League Premier Division:** Hallam 3 Goole 1. **League Cup semi-final:** Ashfield 2 Belper 0. **President's Cup semi-final:** Postponed: Denaby v Bngg. **United Counties League First Division:** Langley Sports 1 Peacehaven 3. **Press and Journal Highland League:** Fraserburgh 1 Rothes 1; Keith 4 Lossiemouth 1. **League of Wales:** Porthmadog 1 Llansantffraid 1. **League Cup semi-final first leg:** Caernarfon 3 Connah's Quay Nomads 3. **FA Youth Challenge Cup Semi-final first leg:** Liverpool 4 Crystal Palace 2. **Pontins League First Division:** Nottingham Forest 3 Derby 2; Oldham 1 Blackburn 1; Ironmaire Rovers 1 Notts County 0; West Bromwich 0 Sheffield Wednesday 3. **Second Division:** Barnsley 2 Aston Villa 1; Burnley 1 Mansfield 0; Huddersfield 1 Blackpool 2; Hull City 0 York 1; Preston 0 Sunderland 0; Rotherham 0 Leicester 2. **Third Division:** Bury 0 Darlington 0; Chester 3 Doncaster 2; Rochdale 0 Carlisle 2; Walsall 2 Scunthorpe 0. **Avon Insurance Combination First Division:** Bristol Rovers 2 Watford 2; Charlton 1 Ipswich 3; Oxford Utd 1 Norwich 1; Southampton 0 Luton 1; Swindon 1 Millwall 3; Tottenham 3 Brighton 0. **Second Division:** Bath 1 Cardiff 4; Bournemouth 3 Cheltenham 1. **European Under-21 Championship Quarter-finals second leg (Palermo):** Italy 2 Portugal 0 (Italy win 2-1 on aggregate). **(Prague):** Czech Republic 1 Spain 2 (Spain win 4-2 on aggregate). **Olympic Qualifying Tournament Asian Zone final (Kuala Lumpur):** South Korea 2 Japan 1. **Third place play-off:** Saudi Arabia 1 Iraq 0 (after sudden-death extra time. South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia qualify for Atlanta). **Premier League:** Twente Enschede 3 PSV Eindhoven 1; Sparta Rotterdam 2 Roda JC Kerkrade 2; Vitesse Arnhem 0 De Graafschap 1; Fortuna Sittard 2 Utrecht 1; Feyenoord 2 Willem II Tilburg 0; Ajax 2 Go Ahead Eagles 1; Volendam 2 Groningen 1. **Leading positions:** 1 Ajax (P27, Pts69); 2 PSV Eindhoven (27-61); 3 Feyenoord (28-47). **Spanish League:** Athletic Bilbao 0 Compostela 0; Valencia 2 Salamanca 0; Barcelona 2 Tenerife 2; Real Betis 2 Albacete 3; Real Madrid 1 Racing Santander 2; Rayo Vallecano 0 Atletico Madrid 3; Zaragoza 1 Sporting Gijon 1; Merida 3 Sevilla 2; Valladolid 0 Espanyol 0; Deportivo Coruna 2 Celta Vigo 1. **Leading positions:** 1 Atletico Madrid (P33, Pts72); 2 Barcelona (33-64); 3 Valencia (33-64).

Golf

SUNNINGDALE FOURSOMES (Sunningdale Golf Club, Berks) Fourth round: G Stewart (Sotogrande) and J Forbes (Scotland) bt M Roberts and I Campbell (Sunningdale) 2 and 1; L Donald (Beaconsfield) and M O'Connor (Stoke Poges) (Sen) bt R Boxall (Chobham) and D Cooper (Birchwood) 5 and 4; R Hurst and T Paterson (Leatherhead) bt J Chalon (Olne Nova); Spann and C Challen (Stoke Poges) at 19th; J Livesley and G Bothwell (Moor Park) bt N Mazwell (Penrith Dunning Range) and A Pickering (Kirkby Lonsdale) 2 and 1; W Bladon and G Jenkins (Kenilworth) (Sen) bt K Staples (Montrose) and A Webster (Edzell) 5 and 4; J Morgan (Forest Pines) and M Landrum (Royal Liverpool) bt S Chapman and N Godfrey (St Enodoc) (Sen) at 22nd; J Chillas (Glenbervie) and M Gray (Lopyeenie) bt C Rodgers (Royal Musselburgh) and P Casey (Burnt) (Sen) 2 and 1; S Whitten and J Jones (Enfield) bt W Riley (PGAE.) and G Smith (Camberley Heath) at 21st. **Quarter-finals:** D and O'Connor bt Bladon and Jenkins 7 and 5; Stewart and Forbes bt Hurst and Paterson one hole; Whitten and Jones bt Chillas and Gray 6 and 5; Morgan and Landrum bt Livesley and Bothwell 2 and 1.

Ice hockey

NHL: Boston 6 Hartford 5 (ot); Detroit 4 Buffalo 2; Washington 1 Montreal 0 (ot); NY Rangers 3 Florida 0; Philadelphia 4 Ottawa 2; Winnipeg 3 Colorado 1; Calgary 1 Chicago 0; Los Angeles 3 Edmonton 3 (ot); Toronto 6 Vancouver 2.

EASTERN CONFERENCE

NORTHEAST DIVISION	W	L	T	GF	GA	PTS
Pittsburgh	44	25	4	334	254	92
Montreal	37	29	8	241	222	82
Boston	35	29	9	252	244	79
Hartford	30	34	9	216	234	69
Buffalo	28	38	7	214	230	63
Ottawa	15	54	4	169	262	34
ATLANTIC DIVISION						
NY Rangers	38	21	14	252	209	90
Philadelphia	38	22	13	248	188	89
Florida	38	26	9	233	215	85
Washington	35	28	10	209	188	80
New Jersey	34	28	11	193	175	79
Tampa Bay	33	29	11	217	229	77
NY Islanders	20	45	8	205	286	48
WESTERN CONFERENCE						
CENTRAL DIVISION						
†Detroit	57	12	5	291	163	119
*Chicago	37	25	12	247	195	86
St Louis	31	30	13	200	218	75
Toronto	30	34	12	225	234	72
Winnipeg	32	37	5	251	268	69
Dallas	23	37	13	204	249	59
PACIFIC DIVISION						
**Colorado	42	23	10	292	219	94
Calgary	31	32	11	218	214	73
Vancouver	29	32	15	260	262	73
Anaheim	29	37	7	208	225	65
Edmonton	28	38	8	218	277	64
Los Angeles	21	38	17	234	282	59
San Jose	18	49	7	230	317	43

† denotes best Conference record; * clinched play-off berth; ** clinched Division title.

Motor racing

The French driver Emmanuel Collard, 24, has joined Tyrrell for the 1996 Formula One season. He will initially help the British-based team with testing but is also a reserve driver should Mika Salo or Ukyo Katayama become unavailable.

Tennis

LIPTON CHAMPIONSHIPS (Key Biscayne, Florida) Men's quarter-finals: A Boetsch (Fr) bt J Courier (US) 7-6 2-6 7-5; A Agassi (US) bt M Joyce (US) 6-4 6-1. **Women's quarter-finals:** C Rubin (US) bt G Sanchez (Arg) 6-3 5-7 6-3; H Habsudova (Slovak) bt I Spirlea (Rom) 6-4 7-5.

CASABLANCA MEN'S OPEN TOURNAMENT (Casablanca, Morocco) Singles, second round: A Berasategui (Sp) bt H Arazi (Mor) 6-1 6-3; G Schaller (Aut) bt M Goellner (Ger) 7-5 6-7 6-4; R Fromberg bt J Cunha-Silva (Por) 6-1 6-4; J Novak (Cz Rep) bt F Maggi (It) 7-6 6-2.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football

BORD GAIS LEAGUE OF IRELAND Premier Division: Drogheda Utd v Galway Utd; Shelbourne v Shamrock Rovers; St Patrick's Athletic v UCD; Athlone Town v Bohemians (all 7.45). **AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION First Division:** West Ham v Portsmouth (2.0).

Rugby League

STONES SUPER LEAGUE: Paris St-Germain v Sheffield (Charlety Stadium, Paris, 7.30).

Other sports

GOLF: Sunningdale Foursomes (Sunningdale).

SNOOKER: Benson and Hedges Irish Masters (Goffs Complex, Kildare).

SPEEDWAY: Premier League: Belle Vue v Coventry (7.30), Oxford v Swindon (7.30).

CASEY SEEKS A PLACE IN THE SUN
Ken Jones meets the Grand National trainer of Rough Quest page 28

Peschisolido's return enlivens quiet deadline day

Football
GUY HODGSON

Transfer deadline day, traditionally a fevered rush to get players registered, passed with almost eerie tranquillity yesterday. Typical of the mood, the one record that was broken belonged to non-League Rushden & Diamonds.

The total amount of money exchanging hands was less than £5m which concurs with the less than dramatic trend of recent years and the highest price was the £1.4m Manchester City paid for the Georgian international striker Mikhail Kavelashvili.

The prize for the most intriguing move went to Paul Peschisolido whose £600,000 transfer from Stoke went through two minutes before the 5pm deadline. His destination is Birmingham City and his wife-cum-managing director, Karren Brady.

Other than that the highest profile transfer was at Blackburn Rovers, where the manager Ray Harford took his spending in the past week to past £4m by signing Grimsby Town's Gary Croft. The 22-year-old defender, who can play either as a left-back or central defender, cost an initial £1m, which could rise by another £700,000, and follows the £3.2m purchase of Garry Flitcroft from Manchester City.

Strangely, the chief activity centred at a place where transfers were pursued but none took place. Leeds United turned down a £3.5m bid for Gary Speed from Everton and a £1m deal for Rod Wallace to rejoin Southampton fell through.

Speed, 26 and a boyhood Everton fan, has been the subject of enquiries from Goodison before but yesterday's bid was the firmest and most substantial. It is understood that Joe Royle's offer made it past the "no chance" stage of negotiation to the Leeds board where it was rejected partly because of a fear of fans' reaction in the wake of the Coca-Cola Cup final defeat. Even so, Howard Wilkinson, who has vowed to stay on as manager, is planning a clear-out.

"I have never been a quitter. I have never run away from a problem in my life and I don't intend running away from this one," Wilkinson said.

Southampton's interest in Wallace, which broke down because of the player's reluctance to return to The Dell, conformed to type as there was transfer activity at the bottom of the Premiership. Bolton paid Bradford City £300,000 for goalkeeper Gavin Ward while West Ham also bought a new goalkeeper, Australian Steve Mautone, from Canberra Cosmos for £30,000. In the First Division, Charlton collected £250,000 by selling Kim Grant to Luton.

As for Rushden & Diamonds, the Beazer Homes league leaders paid a non-League record of £85,000 to the GM Vauxhall Conference club, Kettering, for striker Carl Alford.

YESTERDAY'S LEADING TRANSFERS: Mikhail Kavelashvili, Spartak Vladikavkaz to Manchester City, £1.4m; Gary Croft, Grimsby to Blackburn, £1m; Paul Peschisolido, Stoke to Birmingham, £600,000; Gavin Ward, Bradford to Bolton, £300,000; Kim Grant, Charlton to Luton, £250,000; Paul Cook, Coventry to Tranmere, £250,000; Carl Griffiths, Portsmouth to Peterborough, £225,000; Gincarlo Corazzin, Cambridge to Plymouth, £200,000; Scott Taylor, Millwall to Bolton, £150,000; David Lowe, Leicester to Wigan, £125,000; Anthony Gallimore, Carlisle to Grimsby, £125,000; Steve Cowe, Aston Villa to Swindon, £100,000; Martin Grey, Sunderland to Oxford, £100,000.

Williams dispute Senna findings

Motor racing

Patrick Head, the technical chief of Williams Formula One team, has disputed the official findings of the inquiry into the death of Ayrton Senna at the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix at Imola which blames steering failure for the fatal accident.

The report says the steering column on the three-times world champion's Williams suffered metal fatigue and only a small part of it was intact when he lost control of the car and crashed into a wall. Head disputes that. "We haven't had the opportunity to look at any of the parts properly, but it [the conclusion] would not tie in with the data we have from the car," he said.

He said in an interview with *Autosport* magazine that he is not questioning the expertise of those who compiled the report, but he added: "The technical report states in black and white that the data on the car indicates that the steering was working correctly at the time of impact. And then at the end it says the car must have gone off the track because the driver couldn't steer. It doesn't try to say how the data does not tie in with their judgement."

The inquiry's findings have yet to be published, but Professor Enrico Lorenzini, chairman of the official investigating commission, has confirmed its contents.

Head concedes that there must have been fatigue cracks in the steering column of Senna's car. "The people who did the material analysis are too capable to identify cracks and for there not to be cracks there," he says.

Noting that many jumbo jets fly despite showing fatigue cracks, he said it was a matter of "whether they are present to the extent to actually put a component at risk."

Head was at pains to quash rumours that a modification to the car's steering column had contributed to the accident. He said it had been done 10 days before the season started and scrutinised after the Pacific Grand Prix, when the car had been hit by Nicola Larini's.

"The steering column was subjected to a very careful fatigue crack detection in the factory and no cracks were found on it," he said.

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Emburey out of running for England post

Cricket
DAVID LLEWELLYN

John Emburey has pulled out of the running for the job of England coach. The 43-year-old former England and Middlesex off-spinner, who was believed to have been the choice of Ray Illingworth, the chairman of selectors, informed the Test and County Cricket Board of his decision yesterday.

That leaves the way clear for the other two contenders: the favourite, David Lloyd, who is in Jamaica on Lancashire's pre-season tour; and Phil Neale, Warwickshire's director of coaching.

Neale, 41, who captained Worcestershire to successive County Championship wins in 1988 and 1989, said yesterday from Cape Town, where he is helping Warwickshire prepare for their pre-season tour, that he wants the job. "I would love to be involved in the England set-up in some way," he said.

The TCCB chairman, Dennis Silk, had announced that a decision would be made by this evening, but that is not guaranteed. With two of the leading candidates out of the country it may not be possible, although after the last 10 days or so no one should be surprised at anything after this latest episode in the soap opera of English cricket. The weekly serial will no doubt throw up another twist next week.

But unlike David Graveney's exit from the election for chairman of selectors, Emburey was not put under any pressure by anyone else. He has just taken up a four-year post as coach to Northamptonshire, believed to be worth a total of £200,000. The TCCB, who approached Emburey on Tuesday to establish whether he was willing to be considered for the post, have made it clear that the England coach's job will be just for the summer. Even if it paid £30,000 for those six months, it would not make financial sense for Emburey to accept it on those terms when there is so much more security with Northamptonshire, who said that they would not have stood in Emburey's way had he been offered the job.

Lloyd, at 49 is the oldest of the candidates and he is believed to be on a short-term contract with Lancashire, so the brevity of the England deal would probably not worry him unduly, particularly since it is likely that Lancashire would leave his job open for him if Lloyd failed to produce the goods. A major factor in his favour is that if Lloyd were offered the job it might well influence Michael Atherton to stay on as England captain, and Lord's want that very much particularly since there is no obvious successor.

Illingworth did not want to comment on Emburey's decision, which was announced through his new county. In the statement Emburey, who last night flew to South Africa for a 12-day pre-season tour with Northamptonshire, said: "While being very honoured and flattered at being considered by the TCCB's executive committee I have decided after due and careful thought, that I do not wish to be put forward as a candidate.

"I feel at this stage of my career that I would benefit from gaining more experience in a cricket management and coaching role. Having gained that necessary experience I would be better qualified to serve England. It is my fervent desire and ambition to work with the international team at some time in the future and I fully appreciate the experience of managing the England A team on their recent tour of Pakistan."

Unlike Emburey, who played 64 times for England, Neale has no Test experience, but he said: "I took England A to South Africa and India and it didn't stop me doing a good job. I didn't think I was lacking anything when it came to knowledge of cricket."

Meanwhile David Acfield announced the make-up of his six-man working party which has been set up to look into the running of the national team. The Essex chairman has called on two former England captains, David Gower and Mike Gatting, who will be joined by the Lancashire chairman, Bob Bennett, Micky Stewart, who was England's first manager from 1986 to 1992, and Tim Lamb, the TCCB's assistant secretary.

Jamie Osborne tumbles from Black Humour in the Martell Cup Chase at Aintree yesterday, breaking his collarbone and missing the winning mount in the next race, Ask Tom Report and results, page 29; photograph, Allsport

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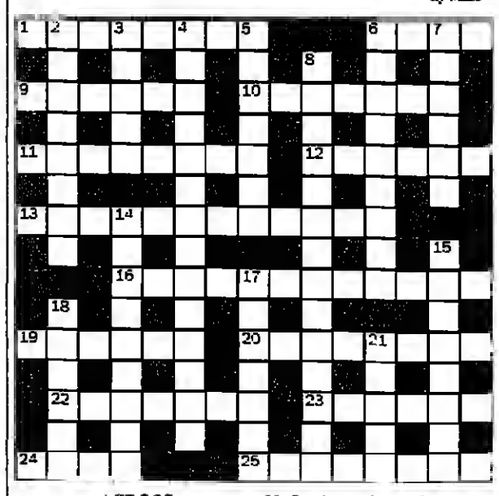
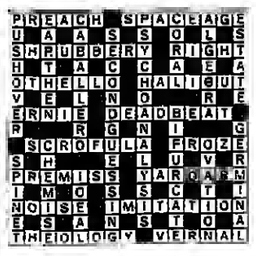


Thursday's solution



ACROSS
1 Pad out supporting essay (8)
6 Incisive, about to lance hand (4)
9 Hybrid is beginning to transmute further (6)
10 One in arrears consequently entered as 16a? (7)
11 Issues left in Red China, mostly resolved (8)
12 Gilt-edged items? (6)
13 Supple, our Tim – flexible, very adaptable (5-7)
16 Cut? Yes and no (4-8)
19 A row in the Strand? (6)
20 Enjoyed the reception? (8)
22 Losing a thou, plays on – just for the thrill of it? (7)
23 East Europeans reportedly at point in pass (6)
24 Man's vocalised song (4)
25 Ghoulish set in original chiller (8)

DOWN
2 Occasion for a jam session, perhaps (4,4)
3 Women in work producing fabric (5)
4 Defender accommodating North's heretical student of evolution (14)
5 Fine, comparatively speaking, leaves one solvent (7)
6 Alert everyone about hazardous ramble (5,4)
7 Is timber incorporated in these models? (6)
8 Dry State? (14)
14 Orchestrator's approach reduced bright tone colour, we hear (9)
15 Mishap with switch (8)
17 Quell racket (the Mafia-type) in violent scene (7)
18 Oppressive humbug – ultimate in tyranny (6)
21 English lad's set up dodge (5)

Agassi's audacity thrills

JOHN ROBERTS
reports from Key Biscayne

Steffi Graf is one match from winning the Lipton Championship for a fifth time, having defeated the American Lindsay Davenport, 6-4, 6-4, in the semi-finals here yesterday.

Continuing the dominant form which has marked her matches, the Wimbledon champion swiftly ended the eighth-seeded Davenport's hopes of building on her encouraging performance against Graf in the last four of the event in Indian Wells, California, a week earlier. Graf will now play either Chanda Rubin, the American sixth seed, or the unseeded Karina Habsudova, of Slovakia.

Yannick Noah patented a spectacular trick shot played through the legs which has become a challenge to would-be imitators. When it comes off, spectators love it, and Andre Agassi made their day en route to the men's semi-finals.

Running towards the back of the court in pursuit of a lob from Michael Joyce, Agassi improvised a winner into the far corner which astonished his American compatriot. "Never in a million years did I think he would ever come close to making it," Joyce said.

It is doubtful that Key Biscayne has heard such a roar of appreciation, and the defending champion bowed to one and all. "Shots like that make it hard to retire," Agassi said. "Down the road you think back at moments like that and you think, 'Wow, pretty exciting'."

Not that the 25-year-old Agassi is creaking towards the rocking chair. He intends to add to the stockpile of memories, and believes that his debut at the Olympic Games in Atlanta in July will rank among the best.

Four years ago, he was too far down the world rankings, at No 12, to be selected for the Barcelona Olympics, which took place only weeks after his triumph at Wimbledon.

Agassi defeated Joyce, 6-4, 6-1, and the cameo occurred in the third game of the second set. Asked if such wizardry was likely to break an opponent's spirit, he said: "I think it pisses them off more than anything."

Joyce, a 23-year-old Californian, ranked No 71 in the world, simply marvelled at Agassi's audacity, and it is a fair bet that the Las Vegan's semi-final opponent, Arnaud Boetsch, would do the same.

The personable Frenchman's approach to his match in the quarter-finals delighted the crowd, who became impatient with Jim Courier's petulance. While the Floridan squandered all but four of 24 break points, and glowered at the line-judges, Boetsch took his three chances and enjoyed himself.

Boetsch, the No 15 seed, has encountered Agassi once before, losing, 6-3, 6-2, 6-0, in the third round of the 1990 French Open, the American going on to be defeated by Andres Gomez in the final.

Orrell lose Healey to Leicester

Rugby Union
STEVE BALE

How convenient that Austin Healey should be in Hong Kong for this weekend's international sevens and so miss Orrell's pioneering four-mile journey to Wigan to play the champions, Leicester, tomorrow – because yesterday the Lancashire club announced the loss of their England A scrum-half to... Leicester.

Healey's absence, albeit diplomatic, from this match alone is bad enough but his permanent loss is much, much worse for a club anxiously seeking resources to fund the new professionalism next season. The converted wing, at 22 an exceptional prospect, has agreed a three-year contract from next season with his new club.

Not that Leicester have yet announced their own plans for funding the new dispensation but a membership of 14,000 gives them a head start and anyway, as Peter Williams, Orrell's rugby director, dolefully acknowledged, Healey will be only the latest in a line of high-quality ex-Orrell players. He joined the club from Waterloo in 1994.

"Austin has signed for Leicester to better his chances of playing for England and I have no qualms about his motives at all," said Williams, whose personal experience, like Healey's, includes leaving Orrell to take up a contract on offer elsewhere – though in 1988 it was rugby league that paid the wages. "It looks as though we are always going to lose good players but that's the way of things."

A job is what rugby union is about to become to its leading practitioners – hence Healey's move. Mark Ring, the former Wales stand-off, is already in rugby employment as West Hartlepool's player-coach and he will make his league debut against Saracens tomorrow, too late to save West from relegation unless it transpires that there is none.